

# L E T T E R S

ADDRESSED TO

His HIGHNESS

The PRINCE of \*\*\*\*\*,

CONTAINING,

COMMENTS on the WRITINGS of the most  
eminent AUTHORS, who have been accus-  
ed of attacking the CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

By M. VOLTAIRE.

G L A S G O W:

Printed for R. URIE, MDCCLXIX.



LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO

HIS HIGHNESS

THE PRINCE OF

CONTAINING

Comments on the Writings of the most  
eminent Authors, who have been accus-  
ed of attacking the Christian Religion.

By M. VOLTAIRE.



CLASSICAL  
LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

# THE CONTENTS.

## LETTER I.

*On Rabelais,* page 1

## LETTER II.

*On the Predecessors of Rabelais, in Germany, and in Italy, and first on the Book, intitl'd Litteræ Virorum Obscurorum,* 17

*On the Jests of old, in Italy, on Religion,* 22

## LETTER III.

*On Vanini,* 28

## LETTER IV.

*On the English Authors who have had the Misfortune to write against the Christian Religion,* 39

*On Toland,* 40

*Of Locke,* 42

*Of Bishop Taylor, and of Tindal,* 44

*Of Collins,* 45

*On Woolston,* 46

*Of Bolingbroke,* 48

*Of Thomas Chubb,* 51

## LETTER V.

*On Swift,* 53

## LETTER VI.

*On the Germans,* 58

# C O N T E N T S.

## L E T T E R VII.

<i>On the French,</i>	66
<i>Of Bonaventure Des Periers,</i>	67
<i>Of Theophilus,</i>	70
<i>On Desbarreaux,</i>	75
<i>On La Mothe Le Vayer,</i>	77
<i>On St. Evremont,</i>	78
<i>On Fontenelle,</i>	80
<i>On the Abbot De St. Pierre,</i>	82
<i>On Bayle,</i>	83
<i>On Barbeyrac,</i>	87
<i>On Mademoiselle Hubert,</i>	89
<i>On Freret,</i>	93
<i>On Boulanger,</i>	101
<i>On Montesquieu,</i>	103
<i>On De La Metrie,</i>	104
<i>On the Curate Mestier De Tripigni,</i>	105

## L E T T E R VIII.

<i>On the Encyclopedia,</i>	110
-----------------------------	-----

## L E T T E R IX.

<i>On the Jews,</i>	116
<i>Of Orobio,</i>	126
<i>On Uriel D'Acosta,</i>	133

## L E T T E R X.

<i>On Spinoza,</i>	134
<i>A Secret Project presented to the Ottoman Emperor. Mustapha the III<sup>d</sup>, by Ali Ben Abdallah, Basha of Cairo. Translated from the Turkish Language.</i>	146



# LETTER I.

## On RABELAIS.

*May it please your Highness,*

**S**INCE your Highness has a mind to know Rabelais to the bottom, I shall begin with telling you, that his life, such as it stands prefixed to his Gargantua, is as false and as absurd as the history of Gargantua himself. You will find there that the Cardinal du Bellay, having carried him to Rome, and this same Cardinal having first kissed the Pope's foot, and then his mouth, Rabelais said, he would kiss his posteriors, but that the Holy father should wash them first. There are some things which a respect of place, of decency, and of the person, render impossible. This silly story could never have been invented but

A

## 2      L E T T E R S   O N

by the lowest dregs of the people in some  
 for's hole.

His supposed petition to the Pope is of  
 the same kind. It is pretended that he re-  
 quested of the Pope to excommunicate him,  
 that he might not be burnt; because, as he  
 said, his landlady having wanted to burn a  
 fagot, without being able to get it to take  
 fire, had cried out, that the fagot must cer-  
 tainly have been excommunicated by the  
 Pope's own word of mouth.

The adventure fathered upon him, at  
 Lyons, is as false and as little probable: It  
 is pretended that not having wherewithal  
 to pay his way at an Inn, nor to defray his  
 expences to Paris, he got the landlady's  
 son to write directions on little packets:  
*Poison for the king; poison for the Queen,*  
*&c.* This stratagem, it is said, he employed,  
 in order to be conveyed and maintained  
 freecost on the road till he got to Paris, and  
 to make the King laugh: It is added, that  
 this was at the very time that the King and  
 all France were bewailing the Dauphin  
 Francis, in 1536, who was believed to have

## EMINENT WRITERS. 3

been poisoned, and that Montecuculi had been quartered on a suspicion of giving him the poison. The authors of this bald story never stood to consider, that on so terrible a demy-proof, Rabelais would have been thrown into a dungeon, that he would have been loaded with irons, that he would have been probably put to the torture ordinary and extraordinary, and that in such mournful circumstances, and under so heavy an accusation, a bad jest would not have much served him for his justification. Almost all the lives of men of note or celebrity have been disfigured with stories that do not deserve more belief.

His book is, it is true, a heap of the most impertinent and the most gross filth, that a drunken Monk could bring off from his stomach; and yet it must be owned that it is a very curious satire of the Pope, of the Church, and of all the events of his time. He chose too, for his greater security, to write under the mask of Folly. This he gives you clearly enough to understand, in his prefatory address.



" Put the case, says he, that in the literal sense you find matters laughable enough, and suitable to the name; do not you therefore stick at that, and be taken, as with the song of the Sirens; but rather interpret in a higher sense, what you might peradventure imagine was only written in gaiety of heart. Did you ever see a dog light on a marrow-bone? Now a dog, as Plato says, book the second of his commonwealth, is of all animals the most philosophical: If then you have seen a dog so circumstanced, you may have observed with what devotion he eyes it, with what eagerness he seizes it, with what fervor he keeps his hold of it, with what sagacity he strikes his teeth into it, with what greediness he cracks it, with what diligence he sucks it. And what induces him to all this? What is the hope of his research? what does he aim at?—Nothing, but a small matter of marrow \*."

\* " Posez le cas, dit il, qu'au sens littéral vous trouvez des matières assez joyeuses & bien correspondantes au nom,

But what is the consequence? Very few readers resembled the dog who sucks the marrow. The most only stuck to the bone, that is to say, to the absurd buffoonries, to the horrid obscenities with which the book is replete. If unhappily for Rabelais the sense of his book had been too deeply penetrated into, if it had been seriously judged, there is all the reason in the world to believe that it would have cost him his life, as it did to all those, who, in those times, wrote against the Romish Church.

It is plain that Gargantua is Francis the first; Louis the XII. Grandgousier, though not the father of Francis, and Henry II. is Pantagruel: the education of Gargantua, and the chapter of Bumfodder (*de Tor-*

“toutefois pas demeurer là ne faut, comme au chant des Si-  
 “rènes, ains à plus haut sens interpréter ce que par avan-  
 “ture cuidiez dit en gaieté de cœur. Veistes vous oncques  
 “chien, rencontrant quelque os médullaire? c’est comme-  
 “dit Platon Lib. 2. de Rep. la bête du monde plus philoso-  
 “phe, si vous l’avez vu, vous avez pu noter de quelle dé-  
 “votion il le guette, de quel soign il le garde, de quel fer-  
 “veur il le tient, de quelle prudence il l’entame, de quelle  
 “affection il le brise, & de quelle diligence il se suce. Que  
 “l’induiet à ce faire? quel est l’espoir de son étude? quel  
 “bien prétend-il? rien plus qu’un peu de mouelle.”

*chéculs*) are a satire on the education given at that time to Princes: the white and blue colors evidently denote the livery of the Kings of France.

The war about a parcel of cakes is the war between Charles V. and Francis I. which began for a quarrel about a trifle between the House of Bouillon la Marche, and that of Chimay: And this is so true, that Rabelais gives the name of Marquet to the carrier of the cakes who began the broil.

The Monks of those times are very naturally painted under the name of Friar John Funnel, nor is it possible to mistake Charles the fifth in the character of Picrocole.

As to the church he does not spare it. From the very first book, chapter 39, thus he expresses himself.

“ How gracious is our God, to give us  
 “ such good liquor! I vow to God that if  
 “ I had lived in the days of Jesus Christ, I  
 “ would have taken special care that the  
 “ Jews should not have catched him in the  
 “ garden of Olivet. May the Devil take



## EMINENT WRITERS. 7

" me too, if I had not hamstrung those  
 " gentlemen the Apostles, who ran away  
 " so cowardly after they had had a good  
 " supper, and thus left their good master  
 " in the lurch, at his greatest need. I hate  
 " worse than poison a man that runs away  
 " when fighting is going forward. 'Sdeath!  
 " Why am not I King of France for four-  
 " score or a hundred years! By the Lord!  
 " I would serve the runaways at Pavia as  
 " dogs are, when their tails are cut. \*."

There is no mistaking the genealogy  
 of Gargantua; it is a most scandalous parody  
 of a most respectable genealogy.

" *From those, says he, are come the Gi-*  
 " *ants, and through them Pantagruel: The*

\* " Que Dieu est bon qui nous donne ce bon piot! j'ad-  
 " vouë Dieu que si j'eusse été au temps de Jésus-Christ,  
 " j'eusse bien engardé que les Juifs l'eussent prins au jardin  
 " d'Olivet. Ensemble le Diable m'e faillie si j'eusse failli à  
 " couper les jarrets à Messieurs les Apôtres qui faisoient  
 " tant lâchement après qu'ils eurent bien soupe, & laissè-  
 " rent leur bon Maître au besoing. Je hais plus que poison  
 " un homme qui fuit quand il faut jouer des couteaux. Hon,  
 " que je ne suis Roi de France pour quatre-vingt ou cent  
 " ans! par Dieu, je vous acouterai en chiens courtaults  
 " les fuyards de Pavia."

" first was Calbrot who begot Sarabroth,

" who begot Faribroth,

" Who begot Hurtaly, him who was a

" great eater of soupe, and reigned in the

" time of the Deluge.

" Who begot Happemouche, (Fly catcher)

" who the first invented the art of smoakdry-

" ing tongues.

" Who begot Foutafnon,

" Who begot Vit de grain \*,

" Who begot Grandgousier,

" Who begot Gargantua,

" Who begot the noble Pantagrue my

" master."

Never were all the books of Divinity more made a jest of than in the catalogue of books, which Pantagrue found in the Library of St. Victor; viz. *Biga Salutis*, *Braguetta Juris*, *Pantouffla Decretorum*, *La Couille-barine des Preux*, the Decree of the University of Paris, concerning the breasts of girls; The Apparation of Ger-

\* The humour of these two names, *Foutafnon* and *Vit-de-grain*, will no more bear a translation, than the Four Stars of Tristram Shandy an explanation.

## EMINENT WRITERS. 9

“trude to a nun in labor; the Mustard-pot  
 “of repentance; *Tartareus de modo ca-*  
 “*candi*; The Invention of the Holy Cross  
 “by the Clerks of Cunning; *Le Couillage*  
 “*des promoteurs*; The Prelates Bagpipe;  
 “The lucrative Tariff of indulgences;—  
 “*Utrum Chimera in vacuo bombinans possit*  
 “*comedere secundas intentiones*; *questio de-*  
 “*battuta per decem hebdomadas in Concilio*  
 “*Constantiensi*; The Trinkets of the Ce-  
 “lestines; The Divines Rat-trap; *Cha-*  
 “*couillonis de Magistro*; The Joys of a  
 “Monk’s Life; The Monkey’s Pater-no-  
 “ster; The Pin-money of Devotion; The  
 “Jack-Asses of the abbots,” &c.

When Panurge asks counsel of Fryar  
 John Funnel, to know whether, if he mar-  
 ries, he should be a cuckold; Friar John re-  
 cites his Litanies: not indeed the Litanies  
 of the Virgin, but the Litanies of the deli-  
 cate C\*\*, the pouting C\*\*, the sucking  
 C\*\*, &c. This bold prophanation would  
 not have been pardonable in a Layman;  
 but in a Priest!——but in a Priest!



After this, Panurge goes to consult Hippocradeus, a profound Doctor of Divinity, who tells him he will be a cuckold, if it should please the Lord.

Pantagruel visits the island of the Lanternmen. These Lanternmen are those Scholastic disputants in Divinity, who, under the reign of Henry the second, begun those execrable dissensions, whence the civil wars took their rise.

The Island of *Tabu-Bobu*, that is to say, of confusion, is England, who changed its religion four times, since Henry the VIII.

By the Island of *Papefiguiere* it is clear enough that the Heretics are meant: as by the *Papimaniens*, those mad enough to give to the Pope the title of God.

Panurge was asked if he had been happy enough to see the Pope; Panurge answers that he had seen three, and was but little the better for it.

The law of Moses is compared to that of Cibeles, of Diana, of Numa: the Decretals are called *Decrottoires*, or shoe-brushes. Panurge avers that having wiped his posteriors

## EMINENT WRITERS. 11

with the Decretals called Clementines, they had given him the piles half a foot long.

Laughing at the low masses which are called dry masses, Panturge says he prefers a wet one, provided it was to be with good wine. Confession is turned into ridicule. Pantagruel goes to consult the oracle of the Divine Bottle, to know if he should take the sacrament in the two kinds, and drink good wine after having eaten the consecrated bread. Epistemon cries out by the way, *Vivat, sisat, pipat, bibat*, for that is the secret of the Apocalypse.

Fryar John Funnel says he must have a whole cart load of girls to comfort him, in case the sacrament should be refused him, in the two kinds.

The Gastrolacs, that is to say, the possessed, or Demoniacs, come in the way. Gaster invents the means of never being hurt with a cannon ball; this is a ridicule upon all miracles.

Before they fall in with the island where there is the oracle of the Divine Bottle,

they come to the Ringing Island, where they find Cagots \*, Clergots, Monkots, Priestgots, Cardingots, and at length the Popegot, who is the only one of his kind. The Cagots had sadly befouled the whole Island: the Capuchingots were the most stinking and mad beasts on it.

The fable of the Ass and Horse; the prohibition made to the Asses against *covering* in the stable, and the liberty the asses take of *covering* in the fair-time, are intelligible enough emblems of the celibacy of the Priest, and of the debaucheries laid to their charge.

The travellers have admission to the Pope. Panurge was going to throw a stone at a bishop who was snooring at High-mass. Master *Aedituus* (that is to say, Master Sexton) hinders him, saying, Honest friend, "strike, stab, murder all the kings and "princes of the earth, by treason, by poison, any way you will, dislodge the angels from Heaven, you may get a par-

\* Hypocrites.



## EMINENT WRITERS. 13

“ don for all from the Popegor: but  
 “ take care you do not touch these sacred  
 “ birds.

From the Ringing-Island they go to the Kingdom of Quintessence, Entelechia; by which is meant the Soul. This personage, of whom ever since the existence of man so much is said, and so little known, is not less turned into ridicule than the Pope: but the doubts on the existence of the soul are much more wrapped up than the railleries on the Court of Rome.

The orders of begging Friars inhabit the Island of Brother-Drones. Their first appearance is in procession. One of them answers in nothing but monosyllables to the questions Panurge puts to him about their girls \*.

\* For the not attempting the translation of this quotation there are more reasons than its not being well possible to torture our language into monosyllabic answers. The original is here supplementally given.

“ Combien son elles? *Vingt.*

“ Combien en voudriez vous? *Cent.*

“ Le remuement des fesses quel est-il? *Dru.*

“ Que disent elles en culetant? *Mot.*

“ Vous instruments quels sont-ils? *Grands.*

“ Quantesfois de bon compte le faites vous par jour?

“ *Six.*

“ Et de nuit? *Dix.*

## 14 LETTERS ON

At length they arrive at the Oracle of the Divine Bottle. The custom of the Church, in those days, was to present to the Laymen, when they took the sacrament, water, to make the wafer go down; and in Germany, this is still in use. The Reformers insisted absolutely on wine for the figurative representation of the blood of Christ.

The Church of Rome maintained that the blood was in the bread, as well as the bones and flesh. The Catholic priests, however, drank wine with the same bread, tho' they would not allow it the Laity to drink. There was in the island of the Oracle of the Divine Bottle, a fine fountain of clear water. The High Priest Bacbuc gives the Pilgrims some to drink, with these words: In times of yore there was a certain Jew Captain, learned and valiant, who leading his people through the deserts, did, in a time of extreme famine, obtain manna from Heaven, which manna had to them, in virtue of their imagination, the very taste of whatever meat

## EMINENT WRITERS. 15

“ or victuals they chose it should have.  
 “ Now here, in like manner, on your  
 “ drinking this wonderful water, you will  
 “ taste wine of whatever flavor you shall  
 “ fancy it. Therefore, Imagine and drink.  
 “ — And so we did; upon which Pan-  
 “ urge cried out, the most delicious wine  
 “ that in my life I ever drank, or may  
 “ ninety and sixteen devils take me \*!”

The famous Irish Dean Swift has copied this stroke in his Tale of a Tub, as well as he did many others. Lord Peter gives to his brothers Martin and John, a piece of dry bread for their dinner, and wants to make them believe that this bread contains good beef, partridges, capons, with excellent Burgundy.

Your Highness will please to remark,

“ Jadis un Capitaine Just, docte & chevaleresque, conduisant son peuple par les deserts en extrême famine, im-  
 “ petra des Cieux la manne, laquelle leur étoit de goût tel  
 “ par imagination que paravant leur étoient réellement les  
 “ viandes. Ici de même, beuvants de cette liqueur mirifique  
 “ sentirez goût de tel vin comme l’aurez imaginé. OP IMA-  
 “ GINEZ, & HEUVEZ : ce que ne vous feimes, puis s’é-  
 “ cria Pánurge, disant; Par Dieu, c’est ici vin de Baume,  
 “ meilleur que oncques jamais je bu, on se me donne à non-  
 “ ante & seize Diabes.”



that Rabelais dedicated that part of his book, which contains this severe satire on the Church of Rome, to the Cardinal Odet de Chatillon, who had not as yet taken off the mask, and declared himself a Protestant. This book was printed with an Imprimatur licence; and this licence of a satire upon the Roman Catholic religion was granted in favour of the obscenities in it, which, in those days, were more valued than the Popegots and the Cardingots. Nor was this book ever prohibited in France: because every thing in it is concealed under a heap of extravagances which did not leave the leisure to penetrate the true aim of the author.

Would you think it, that this Buffoon, who thus laughed aloud at the Old and New Testament, was a Curate!—How did he die?—With these words in his mouth, *I am going in quest of a great May-be.*

Le Duchat has loaded with notes the works of Rabelais, and according to the laudable custom of Commentators, he hard-

ly explains any thing of what the reader would wish to understand; but takes special care to inform him of whatever signifies nothing to him to know.

LETTER II.

*On the Predecessors of RABELAIS, in Germany, and in Italy; and first on the Book, intitl'd Litteræ Virorum Obscurorum.*

*May it please your Highness.*

YOU ask me if any before Rabelais had wrote in his taste. My answer is, that probably his model was that collection of Letters of obscure personages, which was published, in Germany, in the beginning of the sixteenth century. This collection is in Latin, but it is written as naturally, and with as much boldness as Rabelais. Here follows, in the French, an ancient translation of a passage in the twenty eighth letter:

There is an agreement, or concordance,  
 between the Sacred writings and the  
 poetical fables, as you may observe it,  
 of the serpent Python, killed by Apollo,  
 as says the Psalmist, *The Dragon you  
 have formed to laugh at.* Saturn, the old  
 father of the gods who eats his children,  
 is in Ezekiel, who says, *Your fathers  
 shall eat their children.*—Diana going a-  
 bout with her numerous train of virgins,  
 is the blessed Virgin Mary, according to  
 the Psalmist, who says, *Virgins shall walk  
 with her.*—Calisto deflowered by Jupiter,  
 and returning to heaven, is in Matthew,  
 chap. xii. *I will return into my house from  
 whence I came out.* Aglaura transformed  
 into a stone may be found in Job, chap.  
 xli. *His heart is as firm as a stone.*—Eu-  
 ropa gotten with child by Jupiter, is in  
 Solomon. *Hearken to me, daughter, incline  
 thine ear, for the King has coveted thee.*—  
 Ezekiel has prophetised of the nudity of  
 Diana. *Thou wast born naked, I passed  
 that way and saw thee.* The poets have  
 written that Bacchus was born twice,



## E MINENT WRITERS. 19

‘ which signifies, that *Christ was born before all time, and in time.* Semele, who nursed Bacchus, is the prototype of the blessed Virgin; for it is written in Exodus, *‘ Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee wages.’*

These impieties are yet less wrapped up than in Rabelais.

It is a great deal, that in Germany, so early as in those days, they began to laugh at witchcraft. You find in a letter from Acacius Lampirius a pretty strong railery on the conjuration used for compelling by magic, the love of girls. The secret consisted in taking the hair of the girl: It was put into the man’s cod-piece, who was to make a general confession, and to have three masses said, during which he was to put the said hair round his neck: A consecrated taper was lighted at the last gospel, and the following formulary pronounced: *‘ O Taper! I conjure thee, by the virtue of the Almighty God, by the nine choirs of angels, by the joyous virtue, bring hither that girl*

*in flesh and in bone, that I may enjoy my fill of her, &c.*

The Macaronic Latin, in which these letters are written, carry a ridicule with them which it is impossible to preserve in a translation. There is especially a letter of Peter Charly, Messenger of the Grammar to Ortuinus, of which there is no possibility of translating the Latin ambiguities: The matter of it is to know whether the Pope can naturally legitimate a bastard-child. There is another from John of Schwinford, Master of Arts, in which it is maintained that Jesus Christ was a Monk, St. Peter Prior of a Convent, Judas Iscariot a Steward of it, and the Apostle Philip a Porter.

JOHN Schelontzigue relates, in the letter which goes under his name, that he had at Florence met with James Hochstraat, *High-Street*, and some time Inquisitor. 'I made my bow to him, says he, and taking off my hat, said, Father, are you the Reverend Father, or not the reverend Father? He answered me, *I am that I am*. I then

‘ said to him, You are Master James, of  
 ‘ the High-street; but in the name of the  
 ‘ sacred chariot of Elias, how the devil  
 ‘ came you on foot? It is a scandal: *He*  
 ‘ *that is* ought not to walk on foot in the  
 ‘ dirt and mire. He answered me, *Others*  
 ‘ *are come in chariots and on horses, but we*  
 ‘ *come in the name of the Lord.* I told him,  
 ‘ By the Lord it rains hard, and it is very  
 ‘ cold: He lifted his hands to Heaven,  
 ‘ saying, *Dew of Heaven, fall from on high,*  
 ‘ *and let the celestial clouds rain (on) the*  
 ‘ *just?*

It must be owned that this is precisely  
 the stile of Rabelais, and I make no doubt  
 of his having under his eyes, the letters of  
 obscure personages, when he wrote his Gar-  
 gantua and his Pantagruel.

The story of the woman, who, having  
 heard, that all bastards were great men,  
 went in a great hurry to ring at the door  
 of the Cordeliers, to have a bastard gotten  
 upon her, is absolutely in the taste of our  
 Frenchman Master Rabelais.

The same obscenities, and the same



scandals, are thick sown in these two extraordinary books.

*On the Fests of old, in Italy, on Religion.*

ITALY, from so early as the fourteenth century, had produced more than one example of this licentiousness. Look only in Boccace, for the confession of Ser Ciappelletto at the point of death. His confessor interrogating him, desires to know whether he ever fell into the sin of pride. *Alas my good Father,* says the rascal, *I am sadly afraid of being damned for a small emotion of vanity in myself, upon reflexion that I have preserved my chastity my whole life long.—* Was you very gluttonous? *Alas! yes, my good father,* for besides the appointed fast days, *I have always lived on bread and water for three days, in the week; but then I sometimes eat my bread with so much greediness and sensuality, that my gluttony has, doubtless, offended God.—* As to avarice, my son, how did you stand?—*Alas! my good father, I am but too guilty of the sin of avarice, in my*

*having sometimes traded a little that I might give my profits to the poor. — Was you ever overtaken with cholen? — Ob! so much, that when I saw the divine service neglected, and sinners not observe the commandments of the Lord, bless me! what a passion I used to be in!*

Ser Ciapelletto goes on to accuse himself of having had his room swept one Sunday. The Confessor comforts him, and assures him, that God will forgive him: the penitent melts into tears, and says, he is sure that God will never forgive him: that he remembers, when he was two years of age, that he had been froward to his mother; which was an irremissible crime.

*My poor mother, said he, who bore me nine months in her womb, by night and by day, and who, when I was little, carried me in her arms. No! God will never forgive me for having been such a naughty child!*

In short, his confession having been published, this Ciapelletto was sainted, who was one of the greatest rogues of his times.

The Canon Luigi Pulci is much more

licentious in his Poem of Morgante: He begins it with turning into ridicule the first verses of the Gospel of St. John.

*In principio era il Verbo appresso a Dio  
Ed era Iddio il Verbo, e el Verbo lui,  
Questo era il principio al parer mio, &c.*

And yet after all, I am not very clear whether it was quite naturally, or from impiety, that Pulci, having put the Gospel at the head of his poem, ends it with the *Salve Regina*: But whether puerility, or whether licentiousness, this freedom would not be suffered now-a-days; and still more would the answer of Morgante to Margutte be condemned. This Morgante asks Margutte whether he is a Christian or a Mahometan?

*E se gli crede in Christo in Maometto.  
Rispose allor Margutte, per dir tel tosto  
Io non credo più al nero che al azzurro;  
Ma nel Cappone o lessò o voglia arrosto.  
Ma sopra tutto nel bon vino bo fede.*



## EMINENT WRITERS. 25

*Or questo son' tre virtù Cardinali!*

*La gola, e'l daddo, el culo, come io t'ho detto.*

It is indeed very strange, that almost all the Italian writers of the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries, have very little respected that religion of which their country is the center. The more they saw from so near the august ceremonies of this worship, and the High Priests of it, the more they abandoned themselves to a licentiousness which the Court of Rome seemed to authorise by its example. There might be applied to them these verses of the *Pastor fido*.

*Il lungo conversar genera noia,*

*E la noia il fastidia, l'odia al fine.*

Who does not know the liberties taken by Machiavel, Ariosto, Aretine, the Archbishop of Benevento, John Della Casa, Pomponatus, Cardan, and many other men of letters? The Popes took no notice of them, and provided they had customers for their indulgences, and the government

was spared, they might say any thing. The Italians in this resembled the ancient Romans, who, with impunity, laughed at their gods, but who never disturbed the established worship.

Giordano Bruno indeed was one exception; he had braved the Inquisitor at Venice, and having made an implacable enemy of a man so powerful and so dangerous, he was prosecuted for his book *Della bestia trionfante*, and burnt; a punishment invented among Christians against heretics. The author admits no law but the Patriarchal law, the law of nature: the book was composed and written in Sir Philip Sidney's house, at London, who was one of the greatest men in England, and a favorite of Queen Elizabeth.

Among the incredulous, there are commonly ranked all the Princes and Politicians of Italy, of the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries. It is pretended, that if Sixtus the IVth had had any religion, he would not have dipped into the conspiracy of the Pazzi, for which they hung the Archbishop of Florence, in his pontifical robes, out of

one of the windows of the Town-hall. The assassins, who executed their parricide in the very moment that the Priest was holding up the consecrated water to the people, could not, it was justly observed, believe in the Gospel. It appears impossible that there should have been any the least instinct of religion in the heart of an Alexander the Sixth, who caused all the Princes, whom he was stripping of their countries, to perish by the filetto, by the rope, or by poison, and who granted to them indulgences, *in articulo mortis*, that is to say, in the moment of their last sighs.

There is no end of these horrid examples. Alas! my Prince, what do they prove? That the curb of a pure religion, disengaged and cleared from all the superstition which dishonour and render it incredible, was absolutely necessary to those great criminals. If religion had been more purified, there would have been less incredulity, and fewer crimes. Whoever firmly believes in a God, recompenser of virtue, and avenger of guilt, will tremble on the point of assas-



finating the innocent; the dagger will drop out of his hands. But the Italians, knowing nothing of Christianity, but from ridiculous legends, from the follies and frauds of the Monks, imagined there was no religion, because their religion, so dishonored, appeared to them absurd. From Savanarola's being a false Prophet, they inferred that there was no God; which is but a bad argument. The execrable politics of those times made them commit a thousand crimes, and their not less horrid philosophy stifled their remorse; they wished to annihilate the God that was to punish them.

## LETTER III.

On VANINI.

*May it please your Highness,*

**I**N answer to your questions, as to the history of Vanini, I cannot do better

than transcribe here what is said of him, in the sixth edition of a little work composed by a society of men of letters, and without reason attributed to a man of note. (P. 41.)

‘ Let us pass over the whole space of  
‘ time between the Roman republic and us.  
‘ The Romans, much more wise than the  
‘ Greeks, never persecuted any philoso-  
‘ pher for his opinions. It was not so with  
‘ the barbarian nations who succeeded to  
‘ the Roman empire. From the time that  
‘ the Emperor Frederic II. had quarrels  
‘ with the Pope, he was accused of being  
‘ an atheist, and of being the author of the  
‘ book of *The three Impostors*, in conjunc-  
‘ tion with his Chancellor *De Vineis*.

‘ Does that great man, our Chancellor  
‘ de L’Hopital, declare against persecutions?  
‘ He was immediately accused of atheism \*.  
‘ *Homo doctus sed verus Atheos*. A Jesuit,  
‘ as much beneath Aristophanes, as Aristophanes is beneath Homer; a wretch,  
‘ whose name is become ridiculous even a-

\* *Commentarium Rerum Gallicarum*, lib. 28.

among the Romish Fanatics themselves, the Jesuit Garasse, in a word, finds atheists every where, for so he calls all those against whom he lets loose his rage of invective. He calls Theodore Beza an atheist: It is he who has induced the public to error with regard to Vanini.

The unhappy end of Vanani does not move us to indignation and pity, like that of Socrates, because Vanini was but a foreign pedant, without merit. However, Vanini was certainly no atheist, as has been pretended. He was precisely the contrary.

He was a poor Neapolitan priest, by trade a preacher and a divine; a fierce disputant on the quiddities and universalities; *et utram chimara bombinans in vacuo posset comedere secundas intentiones*. But as for any thing farther, he had not a vein in him that tended to atheism. His notion of God is of the most orthodox theology, and the most approved. — God is his own principle and end; parent of the one and of the other; without need



## EMINENT WRITERS. 31

' of either ; eternal without existing in time ;  
 ' For him there is neither past nor future ;  
 ' he is every where, and out of every thing ;  
 ' governing every thing : having created e-  
 ' very thing ; immutable, infinite, without  
 ' parts ; his will is his power, &c.

' Vanini valued himself on renewing  
 ' that pure sentiment of Plato, embraced  
 ' by *Averroes*, that God had created a  
 ' chain of beings from the least to the  
 ' greatest, of which the last link was con-  
 ' nected to his eternal throne : An idea, in  
 ' truth, more sublime than true, but which  
 ' is as far from atheism, as existence from  
 ' nonentity.

' He travelled to get bread, and to dis-  
 ' pute ; but, unhappily, dispute is the road  
 ' quite opposite to that which leads to  
 ' fortune : they that take it are sure to  
 ' make so many irreconcilable enemies, as  
 ' they find learned men or pedants against  
 ' whom they enter into argument. There  
 ' was no other source of Vanini's misfor-  
 ' tune : his warmth, grossness of manners  
 ' in disputing, brought upon him the ha-

‘ tred of certain divines; and having had a  
‘ quarrel with one Francon, or Franconi,  
‘ this Francon, the friend of Vanini’s ene-  
‘ mies, did not fail of accusing him of being  
‘ an atheist that taught atheism.

‘ This Francon, or Franconi, with the  
‘ help of some witness, had the barbarity,  
‘ at a confrontment, to maintain his charge.  
‘ Vanini, under trial, being interrogated  
‘ what he thought of the existence of God,  
‘ answered, that he adored, as the church  
‘ did, a God in three persons. Having  
‘ taken up a straw, this straw, says he, is  
‘ enough to prove that there is a Creator.  
‘ Upon which he pronounced a remarka-  
‘ bly sensible discourse on vegetation, on  
‘ motion, and on the necessity of a Supreme  
‘ Being, without whom there could be no  
‘ motion or vegetation.

‘ The President Grammont, who was then  
‘ at Tholouse, relates this discourse in that  
‘ history of France of his, which is in these  
‘ days so perfectly forgotten: At the same  
‘ time this Grammont, from an unconceiv-  
‘ able prejudice, pretends, *that Vanini said*

all this out of vanity, or out of fear, rather  
 than from any inward persuasion.  
 But on what can this rash and atrocious  
 judgment of the President Grammont be founded? On the face of Vannini's answer it is evident that he ought  
 to have been acquitted of the accusation  
 of atheism. But how came it that he was  
 not? this unfortunate priest dabbled also  
 in physick: there was found in his apartment a live toad, which he kept in a vessel  
 full of water. They did not fail on this  
 to accuse him of witchcraft; it was averred  
 that this toad was the God he worshipped;  
 they gave an impious sense to several passages  
 of his books, than which nothing is more easy  
 nor more common; by taking the objections  
 for the answers, by a malignant construction  
 of some ambiguous phrase, or by poisoning  
 an innocent expression. In short the faction  
 that was oppressing him, extorted from the  
 judges a sentence that condemned this  
 unfortunate man to death.  
 To justify this death, there was a ne-



‘ necessity of accusing this unhappy creature  
‘ of whatever could be thought the most  
‘ horrid. The *Minim* (*minimus*, indeed,)  
‘ Merfenne has pushed the madness of ca-  
‘ lumny to such a degree, that he was not  
‘ ashamed of saying in print, that Vanini  
‘ had left Naples in company with twelve  
‘ of his apostles, to go and convert the  
‘ world to atheism. What a wretched piti-  
‘ ful charge is this! how could such a poor  
‘ man as he was, have a dozen of men at  
‘ his wages? How could he have persuad-  
‘ ed twelve Neapolitans to travel at a great  
‘ expence to spread every where this detest-  
‘ able and shocking doctrine, at the hazard  
‘ of their lives? Would a king have power  
‘ enough to hire twelve preachers of Athe-  
‘ ism. No one before the Father Merfenne  
‘ had advanced so enormous an absurdity.  
‘ But after him it has been repeated: It has  
‘ infected Journals and historical dictiona-  
‘ ries; and the world, who loves any thing  
‘ extraordinary, has, without examination,  
‘ believed this fable.  
‘ Bayle himself, in his *Pensees diverses*,

speaks of Vanini as of an Atheist: He makes use of his name for an example to support his paradox *that a society of Atheists may subsist*; he assures us that Vanini was a man very regular in his morals, and that he was the martyr of his philosophical opinion; on both which points he is equally mistaken. The priest Vanini acquaints us in his Dialogues, composed in imitation of Erasmus, that he had a mistress whose name was Isabella. He wrote with the same freedom that he lived; but he was no Atheist.

A century after his death, the learned La Croze, and a writer who took the name of Philalethes, undertook to justify him; but as none concern themselves about the memory of an unfortunate Neapolitan, a very bad author, there are few that read those Apologies for him."

I shall add to these very sensible reflexions, that in 1717 there was printed at London a Life of Vanini. It was dedicated to Lord North and Gray, and written by his Chaplain, a French Refugee. To give you an

idea of this author of that Life, it is enough to tell you, that he lays, in it, a stress on the testimony of the Jesuit Garasse, the most absurd, and the most insolent calumniator, and at the same time the most ridiculous writer that ever was among the Jesuits. Here follow the words of Garasse quoted by the chaplain, and which, in fact, are to be found in the *Curious Doctrine of the Jesuit*, p. 144.

As to Lucilio Vanini, he was a Neapolitan, a fellow of no account, who had been a vagabond about Italy, to sponge a livelihood, and strolled through a good part of France, in quality of pedant. This wicked rascal being come to Gascony in 1617, proposed to sow his tares to advantage, and to make a rich harvest of impiety, imagining that he had found there minds susceptible of his tenets. He used to insinuate himself among the nobility, and make as free with their tables, as if he had been a retainer of theirs, and familiarised of old with the humor of the country; but he met with understandings



‘ more strong, and more resolute in the  
‘ defence of truth than he had imagined.’

What can your Highness, after this, think of a life written upon such materials? But what will surprize you most is, that when this unfortunate Vanini was condemned, there was not one of the books produced to him, in which it has been imagined that the Atheism was contained for which he was condemned. All the books of this disastrous Neapolitan were books of Divinity and Philosophy, printed with privilege and approbation of the Doctors of the Faculty at Paris. His Dialogues, which are at this day made a handle of blame, and which can hardly be condemned for any thing but being dull and tiresom, were honored with the greatest encomiums in French, in Latin, and even in Greek. Among these elogiums there is the remarkable one of a famous Doctor of Divinity at Paris.

*Vaninus, vir mente potens sophiaque magister*

*Maximus, Italia decus & nova gloria gentis.*

These two verses were afterwards imitated in French.

*Honneur de l' Italie, emule de la Grece,  
Vanini fait connoitre & cherir sa sagesse.*

But all these eulogiums have been forgotten, and nothing remembered but that he was burnt alive. It must be owned, that sometimes people are burnt on rather slight occasions. Witness John Hufs, Jerom de Prague, the Counsellor Anne Dubourg, Serverus, Antony, Urban Grandier, the Marshalls d'Ancre, Morin, and John Calas; witness that innumerable list of unfortunates whom almost all the sects of Christians have, in their turns, caused to perish by fire, a horror unknown to the Persians, to the Turks, to the Tartars, to the Indians, to the Chinese, to the Roman Republic, and to all the people of antiquity, and which will make our posterity blush for their descending from such execrable ancestors.

L E T T E R IV.

*On the English Authors who have had the misfortune to write against the Christian Religion.*

**Y**OUR Highness puts the question to me of who are those that have had the boldness to declare not only against the Church of Rome, but against Christianity itself? the number is prodigious, especially in England. One of the first is Lord Herbert of Cherbury, who died in 1648, and is known by his treatises on the Religion of the Laity, and on that of the Heathens. Hobbes acknowledged no other religion but that to which the government gave its sanction. He was not for having two masters. The Magistrate is the true Pope. This doctrine alarmed and provoked the whole Clergy. They raised a loud cry against the scandal, the novelty of it. As to scandal, or rather the occasion of scandal, they



might be right; but as to novelty of it, there was none; for in England the King had been for a long while the head in the Church; the Empress of Russia is the same in a country of more extensive territory than the Roman empire. The Senate of the Republic of Venice was of old the chief of the religion, and every Roman Emperor was the High Priest of it, the *Pontifex maximus*.

Lord Shaftesbury surpasses by much Lord Herbert and Hobbes, for boldness and for stile. His contempt for the Christian religion breaks forth too glaringly.

Woolaston's Religion of Nature is written with much more decency of moderation; but not having the same charms of stile as Lord Shaftesbury, his book has hardly been read by any but philosophers.

#### On T O L A N D.

T O L A N D has aimed much more violent blows against Christianity: He had a haughty independent spirit; born to narrow

circumstances, he might have made his fortune, if he had been more moderate. Persecution exasperated him, and he wrote against Christianity, at once out of hatred and of revenge.

In his first book, entitled *Christianity not mysterious*, he had himself written rather mysteriously, and his boldness had at least worn a veil. He was blamed, prosecuted in Ireland, and the veil was soon torn. His Jewish Origins, his Nazarenes, his Pantheisticon, were so many open assaults of his on Christianity. But what is surprizing, having been oppressed in Ireland for the most circumspect of his works, he was not so much as molested in England for the most bold of them.

He was accused of having ended his Pantheisticon with this blasphemous prayer, which is, in fact, to be found in some editions. *Omnipotens et sempiterne Bacche, qui hominum corda donis tuis recreas, concede propitiis ut qui hesternis poculis agroti facti sunt, hodiernis curentur, per pocula poculorum, Amen.*

But as this prophanation was a parody of a prayer of the church of Rome, the English were not shocked at it. There is more; it stands demonstrated that this prophane prayer is not Toland's: It had been composed two hundred years before his time by a society of topers. It is to be found in the allegorical *Lent*, printed in 1563. That crazy Jesuit Garasse speaks of it in his *Curious Doctrine*, book the second, p. 201.

Toland died with great courage in 1721. His last words were, *I am going to sleep*. There are some verses extant in honor to his memory, which were certainly not made by an English Divine.

### Of LOCKE.

WRONGFULLY it is, that the great Philosopher Locke has been reckoned among the enemies to the Christian religion. It is true, indeed, that his writings on Rational Christianity differ rather in some places from the common belief; but the religion



of those Primitives, called Quakers, which makes so capital a figure in Pennsylvania, is still more wide of Christianity; and yet they are reputed Christians.

It has been laid to his charge, that he did not believe in the immortality of the soul, because he was persuaded that God, the absolute master of every thing, could (if he pleased) give sentiment and thought to matter. Voltaire has well avenged him of this reproach. He has proved that God can preserve to all eternity, that atom, that monad which he will have deigned to favor with the gift of thought. This was the opinion of the celebrated and holy Priest Gassendi, that pious defender of all that was contained of good in the doctrine of Epicurus. See his famous letter on Descartes.

‘ Whence comes this notion to you? If  
 ‘ it proceeds from the body, you must ne-  
 ‘ cessarily not exist without extension.  
 ‘ Teach us otherwise how it can so be, that  
 ‘ the species or idea of the body which is  
 ‘ extended, can be received in you, that is

'to say, in a substance non-extended. . . . .  
 'It is true, that you know you think, but  
 'you do not know what substance you are,  
 'you who do think, though the operation  
 'of the thought be known to you. The  
 'principal of your essence is hidden from  
 'you, and you do not know what is the  
 'nature of that substance, of which one of  
 'the operations is, to think, &c.'

Locke died in peace of mind, saying to  
 Mrs. Masham, and the friends who were  
 round him, *Life is mere vanity.*

*Of Bishop TAYLOR, and of TINDAL.*

IT is perhaps with equal injustice, that  
 Taylor, Bishop of Downe and Connor, has  
 been ranked among the infidels, on the ac-  
 count of his book, entitled *Ductor Dubi-  
 tantium*. But as to the Doctor Tindal, Au-  
 thor of *Christianity as ancient as the World*,  
 he was certainly the most intrepid maintai-  
 ner of the Religion of nature, as well as of  
 the Royal House of Hanover. He was one  
 of the most learned men of England in his

tory. He was honored with a pension for life of two hundred pounds sterling. As he had no taste for Pope's works, whom he absolutely would have to be without genius, and without imagination, allowing him merely the talent of versifying, and of working up the wit of others, Pope, in return, was his implacable enemy. Besides, Tindal was a red-hot Whig, Pope a Jacobite. It is not astonishing, that Pope should have a stroke at him in his *Dunciad*; a work imitated from Dryden, and too full of low expressions and thoughts, and of disgusting images.

Of COLLINS.

ANTHONY COLLINS was one of the most terrible enemies of the Christian religion: He was Receiver General of the county of Essex, a good Metaphysician, and a man of great learning. It is to be lamented that he made no use of his profound dialectical talent, but against Christianity. Doctor Clarke, a celebrated Socinian, author of



a very good book, in which he demonstrates the existence of God, could never satisfactorily answer Collins's works; and was reduced so low as to invectives.

Collins's Philosophical Researches on the Liberty of Man; on the Foundations of Religion; on Literal Prophecies; on Free Thinking; have unhappily remained victorious works.

#### On WOLSTON.

THE famous Wolston too, Master of Arts at Cambridge, distinguished himself, about the year 1726, by his Discourses against the miracles of Jesus Christ; and so openly hoisted the flag of defiance, that he had his work sold at his own house in London. There were three successive editions of it, of ten thousand copies each.

No one ever before had gone such lengths of rashness and scandal. He considers the miracles and resurrection of our Saviour, as no better than childish, absurd stories. He says, that when Jesus Christ

changed water into wine, for guests who were already drunk, it was that he probably made punch. God carried away by the Devil to the pinnacle of the temple, and to the summit of a mountain, whence were to be seen all the kingdoms of the earth, appears to him a shocking blasphemy. The Devil sent into a herd of two thousand swine, the fig-tree dried up for not bearing figs, at the time that it was not the season of figs, the transfiguration of Jesus, the white raiment, his conversation with Moses and Elias; in short, his whole sacred history, is turned into travesty, and made a ridiculous romance. Wolfston does not spare for using the most injurious and contemptuous expressions. He often calls our Lord Jesus Christ, a *Fellow*, a *Wanderer*, a *begging Friar*.

He solves all this, however, under favor of a mystical sense, saying, that these miacles are pious allegories. All good Christians do not the less hold his works in detestation.

One day, that a woman, heated with de-

vout zeal, met him in the streer, she spir in his face; he wiped it off very coolly, and said, *It is thus that the Jews treated your God.* He died in peace of mind, saying, *This is a pass to which every man must come.*

You will find in the portable Dictionary of the Abbot Avocat, and in a new portable Dictionary, where the same errors are copied, that Wolston died in prison, in 1733. Nothing can be falser; several of my friends saw him since his prosecution, in his own house, where he died at liberty.

### Of BOLINGBROKE.

LORD BOLINGBROKE never fails of telling you, in his Philosophical Works, that Atheists are much less dangerous than Divines in which position he argued like a Minister of State, who knew how much blood religious dissensions and quarrels had cost England: but he ought to have confined himself to the condemning the body of Divines, and not the Christian Religion, from which every true Statesman may draw the



greatest advantages, by bringing it back to its bounds, if it has gone beyond them. Since the death of Lord Bolingbroke, there have been published some works of his still more violent than his philosophical collection; he displays in them a fatal eloquence. No-one had ever written any thing stronger; one may plainly see by them, that he held the Christian Religion in horror. It is a pity that so sublime a genius was for tearing up by the root, a tree he might have made very useful, by pruning its branches, and clearing it of the moss with which it was overgrown.

Religion may be purified. This great work was begun two hundred and fifty years ago: but men can only bear light to come in upon them by degrees. Who could, at that time, have foreseen that men would, one day, arrive at analysing the rays of the sun, at electrifying the thunder, and at discovering the law of universal gravitation, that law which presides over the universe? It is time, according to Bolingbroke, that Theology should be banished as well as ju-

diary Astrology, Witchcraft, demoniac Possession, the divinatory Wand, the universal Panacea, and the Jesuits. Theology has never been of any use, but to overturn the laws, to corrupt the heart : it is only Theology that makes Atheists : for the great number of Divines who have just sense enough to see the ridicule of this chimerical science, have not, however, judgment enough, to substitute to it, a sound Philosophy. Theology, say they, is, according to the signification of the word, the knowlege of God ; but as some vile dabblers, who have prophaned this science, have given the most absurd ideas of God, they thence conclude, that the Deity is a chimera, because Theology is chimerical. This is precisely as if we should say, that bark was not to be taken for a fever, nor temperance used in a plethora, nor blood let in an apoplexy, because there have been bad Physicians : This is to deny a knowlege of the motions of the stars, because there have been Astrologers : it is like denying the evident

effects of Chemistry, because some Quack-chemists have pretended to make gold.

The people of the world, still more ignorant than these little Theologers, say, behold these Batchelors of Divinity and Licentiates, who do not believe there is a God, and why should we? Such are the fatal consequences of the spirit of Theology. A false science makes Atheists, a true science prostrates men before the Deity, and makes those righteous and wise, whom a misuse of Theology had made unjust and senseless.

Of THOMAS CHUBB.

THOMAS CHUBB was a Philosopher formed by nature. The subtilty of his genius, of which he did not make the best use, made him embrace not only the party of the Socinians, who looked upon Jesus Christ, as having been nothing more than a man, but also that of the rigid Deists, who acknowledge only one God, and reject all mystery. His errors are methodical: He wished to bring all men to unite in one Religion,



which he thought the most pure, as being the most simple. The word Christianity is to be found in every page of his works, but the thing itself no where in them. He has the assurance to think, that Jesus Christ was of the religion of Thomas Chubb; but Thomas Chubb was not of the religion of Jesus Christ. A perpetual perversion of words constitutes the foundation of his persuasion. Jesus Christ has said, Love God, and your neighbour: Therein is the whole law; therein consists all humanity. Chubb sticks to these words, and keeps clear of all the rest. Our Saviour appears to him a Philosopher, like Socrates, who, like him, was put to death for having combated the superstitions and the priests of his country. He writes, however, with temper, and constantly shrowds himself under a veil. The obscurities in which he wraps himself up, have procured him more of reputation, than of readers.

L E T T E R V.

On S W I F T.

*May it please your Highness,*

I Have not, it is true, as yet entered on the article of Swift; he does deserves one a part; he is the only English Writer, of this kind, that had humor. It is very surprising that the two persons, who are the most reproachable for having dared to turn the Christian Religion into ridicule, should both of them, have been Priests, having charge of souls. Rabelais was Curate of Meudon, and Swift was Dean of the Cathedral of Dublin: Both of them broke more jests on Christianity, than what Moliere was so lavish of on Physic, and both of them lived and died in peace, while so many others were persecuted, even to death, for some equivocal words;

*But oft, where one shall sink, there swims a  
brother,  
And one shall perish by what saves another.*

Swift's Tale of the Tub is an imitation of the three rings. The Fable of the three rings is a very antient one; of the time of the Cruzades. It is of an old man, who dying leaves a ring to each of his three children; these go to loggerheads about which shall have the most beautiful of them; after long debates, they at length discover, that the three rings were all perfectly alike. The good old man is Theism, the three children are, the Jewish Religion, the Christian and the Mahometan.

The author forgot the religions of the *Magi*, and of the Bramins, not to mention many others; but he was an Arabian, who knew no more than these three sects. This Fable leads to that indifference which was so much reproached to the emperor Frederic the Second, and to his Chancellor, *De Vineis*, who were accused of having jointly composed the book *De Tribus Impostori-*



*bus*, which, as you well know, never existed \*.

The Tale of the three rings is to be found in some collections: Dean Swift has substituted to them three Coats; the introduction to this impious raillery is worthy of the work; it is a print, in which are represented three ways of speaking in public; the first is the theatre of harlequin and merry-andrew; the second is a preacher, whose pulpit is the half of a tub; the third is a ladder, from the top of which a man, who is going to be hanged, harangues the people.

A Preacher between a merry-andrew, and a man at the gallows, makes no very good figure. The body of the book is an allegorical history of the three principal sects which divided the greatest part of Southern Europe, the Romish, the Luther-

\* An Editor of the French Original is surprised that the Author should deny the existence of the book of *The Three Impostors*, it being, as he says, notorious, that it was printed thirty years ago, and since reprinted. May be so, but was not the Editor of those Three Impostors himself an Impostor on the Public?

an, and the Calvinist; for he says nothing of the Greek Church, which possesses six times the territory of the three others; and leaves quite out of the question Mahometanism, which is still more extended than the Greek Church.

The three brothers to whom the good old man, their father, has bequeathed three plain coats, and all of the same color, are Peter, Martin, and John; that is to say, the Pope, Luther, and Calvin. The author makes his three heroes commit more follies than Cervantes ascribes to his Don Quixot, and Ariosto to his Orlando Furioso; but the Lord Peter is the worst used by him of the three brothers. This book is wretchedly translated into French; it was not indeed well possible to do justice to the humor with which it is seasoned; this humor turns chiefly on the quarrels between the Established Church of England, and the Presbyterian, on customs, on incidents unknown in France, and often on a certain play upon words particular to the English language. For exemple, the word which

signifies in French the Pope's Bull, signifies in English, both that and the animal called a Bull. Such words are a source of ambiguities, and pleasantry, entirely lost upon a French reader.

Swift was much less learned than Rabelais, but his wit is more pointed, more delicate; he is the Rabelais of high life. The Lords Oxford and Bolingbroke procured the best benefice in Ireland, next to the Archbishoprick of Dublin, for a man who had soufed the Christian religion all over with ridicule; and Abadie, who had written in favour of that very religion, a book which had met with the highest encomiums, could get only a paltry little benefice in a country village. But it is to be observed, that they both died in a state of insanity.



## LETTER VI.

*On the GERMANS.*

*May it please your Highness,*

**Y**OUR Germany, too, has not been without its great Noblemen and Philosophers, accused of irreligion. Your celebrated Cornelius Agrippa was looked upon not only as a Conjuror, but as an Infidel. Yet this is contradictory ; for a Conjuror believes in God, since he dares intermix the name of God with all his conjurations : He believes also in the Devil, since he sells him to the Devil. Loaded, like Apuleius, with these two calumnies, Agrippa was well off that he was only in prison for it, and that he only died in an hospital. It was he who the first broached, that the forbidden fruit of which Adam and Eve ate, was carnal co-

pulation, to which they had abandoned themselves, before their having received from God the nuptial benediction. It was also he, that, after having cultivated the sciences, was the first to write against them. He decried the milk with which he had been nursed, and which he had very ill digested. He died in 1535, in the hospital of Grenoble.

I know nothing of your famous Dr. Faustus, but by the comedy of which he is the heroe, or protagonist, and which is acted in all the provinces of the empire. Your Dr. Faustus appears there in a constant and regular commerce with the Devil: He writes letters to him, which are carried in the air by means of a string of packthread. He receives answers from him. There are miracles in every act; and at the end of the piece, the Devil carries Faustus away. It is said, he was born in Swabia, and lived under Maximilian the First. I do not believe he made his fortune under Maximilian, any more than under his other master.

The celebrated Erasmus was suspected

of irreligion equally by Papists and by Protestants, because he laughed at the excesses into which both of them fell. When two parties are in the wrong, he who keeps neuter, and is consequently in the right, is pecked at by both. The statue erected to his honor in the market-place of Rotterdam, his country, has revenged him of Luther and the Inquisition.

Melancthon (*Black earth*) was pretty much in the case of Erasmus. It has been pretended that he changed no less than fourteen times his opinion on the original Sin, and on Predestination. He was called the Proteus of Germany. He could have been the Neptune of it, for bridling the fury of the winds.

*Jam cælum terramque meo sine numine venti  
Miscere, & tantas audetis tollere moles! VIR.*

He was moderate, with the spirit of toleration. He passed for indifferent. Being become a protestant, he advised his mother to continue a Roman Catholic. Thence it



was judged that he was neither one nor the other.

I shall omit, with your leave, the multitude of those sectaries who have been reproached rather with embracing factions, than with adhering to opinions, and with believing rather in ambition and lust of gain, than either in Luther or in the Pope. Nor shall I say any thing of those philosophers accused of having had no other gospel than the gospel of Nature.

I come to your illustrious Leibnitz. Fontenelle, in pronouncing his elogium at Paris, in full academy, expresses himself as to his religion, in the following terms. *'He is accused of having been only a great and rigid observer of the law of natural right: his Pastors gave him reprimands upon it in public, and in vain.'*

You will hereafter soon, my Prince, see, that Fontenelle, who spoke thus, had himself been liable to not less heavy imputations.

Wolff, the disciple of Leibnitz, was exposed to the greatest danger: he taught

mathematics in the university of Hall, with prodigious success. The theological Professor, *Lange*, who was catching his death of cold, in the freezing solitude of his school, while Wolff had five hundred hearers, took his revenge by informing against Wolff, for an atheist. The late king of Prussia, Frederick William, who understood much better the exercise of his troops, than he did the disputes of the learned, believed Lange too easily, and gave Wolff his choice of quitting his territories in twenty-four hours, or of being hanged: the philosopher instantly resolved the problem, by withdrawing himself to Marpourg, where his scholars followed him, and where his reputation and fortune both increased. The town of Hall lost by his retreat above four hundred thousand florins a year, which the affluence of Wolff's disciples had brought to it: the King's revenue suffered by it; and the injustice done to the Philosopher only recoiled on the Monarch. Your Highness knows with what equity and greatness of soul the

successor of this prince repaired the errors into which his father had been drawn.

It is said in a Dictionary \*, under the article *Wolff*, that Charles Frederic, a Philosopher with a crowned head, the friend of Wolff, raised him to the dignity of Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Elector of Bavaria, and of Baron of the Empire. The King, of whom this is said in that article, is in fact a philosopher, a man of literature; a very great genius, as well as a great captain, on the throne, but he has no name of Charles; there is not in all his dominions a University belonging to the Elector of Bavaria; and it is the Emperor's prerogative alone to make Barons of the Empire. These little inaccuracies, which are but too frequent in all dictionaries, might be easily corrected.

Since that time, the liberty of thinking has made astonishing progresses in the north of Germany. This liberty has even been carried to such an excess, that in 1766, there

\* The Historical Dictionary, printed for Michael Rey.



was printed an abrigement of the Ecclesiastical History, of Fleuri, with a preface in an eloquent stile, and which begins as follows :

‘ The establishment of the Christian religion has, like all empires, had but weak beginnings. A Jew, of the dregs of the people, whose birth was doubtful, who mixes precepts of morality with the absurdities of ancient prophecies, to whom miracles are attributed, is the heroe of this sect. Twelve Fanatics spread themselves from the East into Italy, &c.’

It is to be lamented, that the Author of this passage, himself in other respects profound and sublime, should have suffered himself to be so far carried away into freedoms so daring and so fatal to our holy religion. Nothing can be more pernicious. And yet this prodigious licentiousness has hardly excited any clamors. It is to be wished that this book should not be much divulged. There have not, I presume, been many copies printed of it.

The discourse of the Emperor Julian a

gainst Christianity, translated at Berlin by the Marquess d'Argens, Chamberlain to the King of Prussia, and dedicated to Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, would be not a less deadly stroke given to religion, if the Author had not taken care to tranquillise, by learned remarks, the alarms of tender consciences. The work is preceded by a sensible and instructive Preface, in which he does justice (it is true) to the great qualities and to the virtues of Julian; in which he also owns the deplorable errors of that Emperor. I have a notion that this book is not unknown to your Highness, and that your Christianity will not have been staggered by it \*.

\* The Editor of the French original subjoins the following note: It does not appear to me, that our elegant and religious Author is much acquainted with those German Authors, who, as he expresses it, have had the misfortune to write against religion. This is thought the reason that, in his commented list, he has not mentioned a *Knutzeus*, a *Koerbach*, a *Thomasius*, a *Law*, a *Dippel*, known under the name of *Democritus*, a *Bakker*, an *Edelmann*, besides many others, whose names made noise enough in their time.

## LETTER VII.

*On the FRENCH.*

**Y**OU have, may it please your Highness, given a very just guess, that in France there are more men accused of impieties than there are really impious: just are there more suspicions of poison, than there are in fact poisoners. The thoughtless vivacity with which this nation is reproached, hurries it into every rash judgment: this restless petulance has been alike the cause that many Authors have written with liberty, and have been judged with cruelty. The extreme delicacy of the Theologers, and of the Monks, has ever made them dread the diminution of their credit: They are like centinels, who are always repeating the watch-cry, and think for ever that the enemy is at the



gates. On the least suspicion of being aimed at in a book, they found the alarm.

*Of BONAVENTURE DES PERIER.*

One of the first examples, in France, of a persecution founded on panic terrors, was the strange hubbub that lasted so long about the *Cimbalum Mundi*, a little book, at the most, of fifty pages. It is of one Bonaventure des Periers, who lived at the beginning of the sixteenth century. This Des Periers was a domestic of Margaret de Valois, sister to Francis the First. Literature was just then beginning to revive: Des Periers meant to compose, in Latin, some dialogues in the taste of Lucian: He then wrote four very insipid ones, on predictions, on the philosopher's stone, on a talking horse, on Actæon's dogs. Now in all this wretched dull schoolboy's farrago, there is not a single word that has any the least or most distant relation to any of the things which are the object of our reverence.

It was told some doctors of Divini

ty that they were levelled at in the characters of the dogs and the horses. As to the horses they had not been accustomed to that honor. The doctors set up a howl; the work was immediately sought after, translated into French, and printed; upon which every idle person fancied he found allusions in it, and the Doctors of Divinity began to halloo the heretic, the impious man, the Atheist. The little book was informed against to the Magistrate, the bookseller Morin was thrown into prison, and the Author into terrible agonies.

The injustice of the persecution proved such a shock to the brain of Bonaventure, that he fell upon his sword, and killed himself in the palace of the princess Margaret. All the tongues of the Preachers; all the pens of the Divines, exercised themselves on this tragic death. He has made away with himself, therefore he did not believe in God, therefore his little book, which however no one had had the patience to read through, was the catechism of the Atheists: every one said it, every one believ.

ed it: *Credidi propter quod locutus sum.*—*I believed it because I have said it,* is the motto of mankind. They repeat an absurdity, and by dint of repeating it, come to be persuaded of it.

This book grew extremely rare; another reason this for believing it infernal. All the Authors of literary anecdotes, and of dictionaries, have not failed of affirming that this book was the fore-runner of Spinoza.

We have still extant, a work of a Counsellor of Bourges, whose name was Catherinot, most worthy of the armorial ensigns of Bourges. This great judge says, ‘We have two impious books, which I never saw, the one *De Tribus Impostoribus*, the other the *Cimbalum Mundi*.’—But, my good friend, if thou didst never see them, why dost thou speak of them?

The Minim Mersenne, the Factor of Descartes, he who gave twelve apostles to Vanini, says of Bonaventure Des Periers, ‘*He is a monster, and a reprobate, of consummate impiety.*’ You are to observe, he had never read his book. There were not



known to remain above two copies in all Europe, when Prosper Marchand reprinted it, at Amsterdam, in 1711. Then the veil was drawn aside; and no one exclaimed at the impiety or atheism of the book; it was only found intolerably dull, and it has not been spoken of since.

### OF THEOPHILUS.

THEOPHILUS has fallen into the like oblivion, though very celebrated in his time. He was a young man, a good companion, and made very easily indifferent verses, which however were once in vogue; he had made great proficiency in literature, wrote Latin very purely, and made alike a good figure at table or in a study, and was welcome to all the young nobility that valued themselves upon wit, and especially at the illustrious Duke of Montmorenci's, who, after having gained battles, lost his head on a scaffold.

Being one day in company with two Jesuits, and the conversation having fallen

on certain points of the wretched philosophy of those days, the dispute ran into acrimony. The Jesuits substituted invectives to reasons. Theophilus was at once a Poet and a Gascon, *genus irritabile vatum et Guasconum*. He composed a small poem, in which the Jesuits were not much spared; Here are three lines of it, that circulated over all France.

*Cette grande et noire machine,  
Dont le souple et le vaste corps,  
Etend ses bras jusqu'a la Chine\*.*

Theophilus himself repeats them in an epistle in verse from his prison to Lewis the Thirteenth. All the Jesuits gave a loose to their rage against him. The two most furious of them, Garasse and Guerin, dishonored the pulpit, and violated the laws, by naming him in their sermons, treating him as an Atheist, an execrable reprobate, and exciting against him all their female de-

\* This great and black machine, of which the supple and enormous body extends its arms to China.

votes. A Jesuit more dangerous, Voisin by name, who neither wrote nor preached, but who had a great interest with the Cardinal Rochefoucault, commenced a criminal prosecution against him, and suborned, for that purpose, a young debauchee, Sajeot by name, who had been his scholar, and who passed for having been subservient to his infamous pleasures, which the party accused reproached him with, at confrontment. In short, the Jesuit Voisin obtained, by means of the favor of the Jesuit Caussin, Confessor to the King, an order for taking him into custody on a charge of impiety and atheism. This unhappy man was, on this, forced to fly for it, and the procedure went on against him, in a course of outlawry, so that, in 1621, he was burnt in effigy. Who would imagine that the rage of the Jesuits was not to be satiated even with this? Voisin hired a Lieutenant of the Constableship, one called Le Blanc, to take him up in his retreat in Picardy. He was thrown, loaded with irons, into a dungeon, amidst the acclamations of the populace, to whom Le Blanc kept crying out, ' This is an Atheist, we are going to



burn.' Thence he was carried to the *Conciergerie*, where he was put into the same cell that Ravaiillac, the assassin of Henry the Fourth, had been. He remained there a whole year, during which the Jesuits prolonged the procedure, in order to procure proofs against him.

While he was in irons, Garasse was publishing his *Curious Doctrine*, in which he says, that Pasquier, Cardinal Wolsey, Scalliger, Luther, Calvin, Beza, the King of England, the Landgrave of Hesse, are villainous Atheists and Carpocratians. This Garasse wrote in his time as the miserable ex-jesuit Nonote has written in his: all the difference is, that the insolence of the one is founded upon the influence which the Jesuits then had, and that the rage of the absurd Nonote is the fruit of the horrors and contempt into which the Jesuits are fallen in Europe: it is the serpent striving to bite, even after it is cut in pieces. Theophilus was especially examined as to the *satirical Parnassus*, a collection of obscenities in the taste of Petronius, of Martial, of Catullus,

of Aufonius, of the Archbishop of Benevent, to la Casa, of the Bishop of Angouleme. Octavian de St. Gelais, and of Melin de St. Gelais, his son, of Aretine, of Chorier, of Marot, of Verville, of the Epigrams of Rousseau, and of a hundred other licentious fooleries. This work was not a production of Theophilus; he had no hand in it. A Bookseller had collected all that he could from Menard, from Colletet, from one Frende, and from some Lords of the Court. It was proved that Theophile was in no wise concerned in this edition, against which he had himself presented a petition. In short, the Jesuits, however powerful they were in those days, could not have the consolation of getting him burnt, and it was even with difficulty that they could prevail for his being banished from Paris. Yet he returned there, in spite of them, protected by the Duke of Montmorenci, who gave him an apartment in his house, where he died in 1626, of the grief under which he was at length forced to sink, by so cruel a persecution.

On DESBARREAUX.

DESBARREAUX, a counsellor of Parliament, who, in his youth, had been a friend of Theophilus, and who had not deserted him in his disgrace, has constantly passed for an Atheist; and upon what grounds? On a story made of him about an adventure of a bacon-ommelett \*. A young man naturally of a turn for licentious fallies of wit, might very well, in a tavern, have deviated from the sacred institution of meagre-diet on a Saturday, and, amidst a storm of rain and thunder, have thrown the dish out of the window, saying, here is a racket indeed about a bacon-ommelette! without the more for that deserving the horrid accusation of Atheism. It was, doubtless, a great irreverence; it was insulting the Church, in which he was born; it was a derision of the ordinance of meagre days; but it was not a denial of the existence of God.

\* A bacon-fry with eggs.



But what principally fixed this reputation on him, was the indiscreet rashness of Boileau, who, in his Satire on Woman, which, by the bye, is not his best, speaks of more than one Capaneus in petticoats.

Du tonnerre dans l'air bravant les vains carreaux,  
Et nous parlant de Dieu du ton de Des-Barreaux \*.

Yet never did this Magistrate write any thing against the Deity. It is not fair to blast with the name of Atheist, a man of merit, against whom there is no proof; it is a cruel indignity. On Desbarreaux was fathered the famous sonnet, which ends thus :

Tonne, frappe, il est tems, rend moi guerre pour  
J'adore, en perissant, la raison qu't'aigrit: [guerre,  
Mais dessus quel endroit tombera ton tonnerre,  
Qui ne soit tout couvert du sang de Jesus-Christ ?

This sonnet is absolutely good for nothing. *Jesus Christ* in verse is not tolerable. *Rend moi guerre pour guerre*, is not French ;

\* Braving the vain thunderbolts in the air, and speaking of God in the strain of Desbarreaux.

## EMINENT WRITERS. 77

besides, *guerre pour guerre* itself is very flat; and *dessus quel endroit* is detestable. These verses are of the Abbot Lavau; and Desbarreaux ever took it very ill their being imputed to him.

### On LA MOTHE LE VAYER.

THE temperate, discreet, La Mothe le Vayer, Counsellor of state, Preceptor of the brother of Lewis the XIVth, and even for near a year, to Lewis XIV himself, did not less incur suspicions than the voluptuous Desbarreaux. There was at that time very little philosophy in France. His *Treatise on the Virtues of the Heathens*, and the *Dialogues of Orasius Tubero*, made him enemies. The Jansenists especially, who agreed with St. Augustine, in looking on the virtues of the great men of antiquity as no better than *splendid sins*, gave him no quarter. The highest pitch of fanatic insolence is, their saying, 'No one shall have virtue but we and our friends; Socrates, Confucius, Marcus Aurelius, Epic-

*'tetus, were reprobates, because they were  
'not of our communion'. People are pretty  
well now recovered from this absurdity;  
but in those days it was predominate. It  
stands related in a very curious work, that  
one day one of those demoniacs, seeing La  
Mothe le Vayer pass in the gallery of the  
Louvre, said aloud, 'There goes a man  
'without religion.' Le Vayer, instead of  
having him punished, turned to the man,  
and said, 'My friend, I have so much reli-  
'gion that I am not of your religion.'*

#### ON ST. EVREMONT.

THERE have been some works published  
against Christianity, under the name of St.  
Evremont, but none of them are his. It had  
been imagined, that after his death those  
dangerous books might be made to pass un-  
der favour of his reputation; and indeed be-  
cause there are to be found in the works  
really his, several strokes which denote a  
mind rid of the prejudices of infancy. Be-  
sides, his Epicurean life, and his perfectly



philosophical death, served for a pretext to those who wanted to gain credit with his name for their pernicious opinions. We have especially an analysis of the Christian religion, which is attributed to him. It is a work tending to invalidate the whole chronology, and almost all the facts of the holy Scriptures. No one has gone deeper than the author into a discussion of that opinion of which some Divines were, that the Astronomer Phlegon had spoken of the darkness which covered the whole earth at the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. I own, that the author is perfectly in the right against those who sought for a support in the testimony of this Astronomer; but then he is much in the wrong to aim at combating the Christian system, under the pretext that it was ill defended.

Besides, as to St. Evremont, he was incapable of such scientific researches. His wit was agreeable and genuine; but he had little of learning, no genius, and his taste not very pure. His treatises on the Romans procured him a reputation, by which he

was unhappily encouraged to compose the wretchedest plays, and to make the baldest verses that ever tired readers, who are, however, no longer tired with them, for nobody now reads them. He may be placed in the rank of those men, amiable and full of wit, who flourished in the brilliant times of Lewis the XIV<sup>th</sup>, but not in the rank of the superior geniuses.

### On FONTENELLE.

BERNARD DE FONTENELLE, since Secretary of the Academy of Sciences, had a greater mock to encounter. In 1686 he got inserted in the republic of Letters of Bayle, a very ingenious relation of the Island of Borneo: this was an allegory on Rome and Geneva; they were anagrammatically couched under the names of two sisters, Mero and Enegu. Mero was a tyrannical forcerefs, who exacted from her subjects that they should come and declare to her their most secret thoughts, and afterward that they should bring her all their money. Be-

fore they were admitted to kiss her feet, they were obliged to adore the bones of the dead; and often, when they had a mind to breakfast, she made the bread disappear. In short, her forceries and her mad procedure raised a great party against her, and her sister Enegu got the half of her kingdom from her.

Bayle did not, at the first, discover the drift of the pleasantry; but the Abbot Terfon having commented it, the thing made a great noise. It was in the time of the revocation of the edict of Nantes; Fontenelle ran some risque of being shut up in the Bastile, upon which he had the meanness to make some poor verses enough in honor of this revocation, and of the Jesuits. They were inserted in a paltry collection, intituled, *Le Triomphe de la Religion sous Louis le Grand*. Printed at Paris, for L'Anglois, in 1687.

But having afterwards with great success methodised, in French, Vandale's learned history of Oracles, the Jesuits persecuted him. Le Tellier, Confessor of Lewis the



XIVth, recalling to mind the allegory of Mero and Enegu, would fain have treated him as the Jesuit Voisin had treated Theophilus. He solicited a *Lettre de cachet* against him. But the celebrated Keeper of the great seal, D'Argenson, at that time Lieutenant de Police, preserved Fontenelle from the rage of Le Tellier.

This anecdote is more important than all the literary bagatelles put together, of which the Abbot Trublet has frothed up a great volume concerning Fontenelle. It shews the danger to which philosophy is exposed, when a fanatic, or a rascal, or a monk who is both, has unhappily the ear of the Prince. This is a danger to which a Philosopher will never be exposed under your Highness.

*On the Abbot De. ST. PIERRE.*

THE allegory of Mahometanism, by the Abbot of St. Pierre, was much more striking than that of Mero. All the works of this Abbot, of which several have passed for

reveries, are the works of an honest man and a zealous patriot, but every thing in them has a smack of pure Theism. Yet, he was not persecuted; an exemption he owed to his writing in a manner that made no one jealous: His stile has no graces; he was little read, and pretended to nothing; those who read him laughed at him, and called him, a good kind of man, (*un bon homme*.) If he had written like Fontenelle, he would have been undone, especially as the Jesuits were then in reign.

On BAYLE.

MEANWHILE, and for many years before, there was rising into reputation the immortal Bayle, the first of Dialecticians, and of Sceptic Philosophers. He had already published his thoughts on the Comet, his Answers to the Questions of a Country correspondent, and at length, what may be called his Dictionary of Reason. His greatest enemies are forced to own that, in all his works, there is not a single line that can be called

an evident blasphemy against religion; but then his greatest defenders must allow, that in his articles of controversy, there is not one page that does not lead the reader into doubt, and often into incredulity. They could not convict himself of being impious; but he made others impious by putting his objections against our doctrinal tenets, into so strong a light, that it was not well possible for a mediocrity of faith not to be staggered with them; and unhappily the greatest part of his readers are in the case of a mediocrity of faith.

It is related in one of these historical dictionaries, where truth is so often mixed with lies, that the Cardinal de Polignac, passing by the way of Rotterdam, asked of Bayle whether he was a Church of England-man, or a Lutheran, or a Calvinist? and that his answer was, *'I am a Protestant, for I protest against all religions.'* Now, in the first place, Cardinal Polignac never took Rotterdam in his way, but when he went to conclude the peace of Utrecht in 1713, and then Bayle was dead.



*Secondly*, This learned Prelate was not unapprised of Bayle's being born a Calvinist in the country of Foix, and that never having been in England nor in Germany, it was not natural to think he could be either a Church of England-man or a Lutheran.

*Thirdly*, He was too polite to question a man about his religion. Bayle, it is true, had really sometimes said what he was feigned to have said to the Cardinal, to which he would add, that he was something like Homer's cloud-compelling Jove. He was, in other respects, a man of great regularity and simplicity of manners; a true Philosopher to the utmost extent of that word. He died suddenly, after having written these words, '*See what that thing called Truth is.*'

He had sought for it all his life, and found nothing every where but errors.

After him, inquiries have gone greater lengths. A Maillet, a Boulainvilliers, a Boulanger, a Melliier de Trepigni, the learned Freret, the dialectician du Marfais,

the intemperant La Mettrie, have attacked Christianity with as much inveteracy as a Porphyry, a Celsus, or a Julian.

I have often tried to inquire out the reason, which could determine so many modern writers to display their hatred against Christianity. Some have answered me, that the writings of the more modern apologists of our religion had provoked their indignation; that if those apologists had written with that moderation with which their cause ought to have inspired them, no-one would have thought of encountering them; but that their bilious overflows were contagious, and gave the bilious disorder; that their passion excited passion; and that the contempt which they affected for Philosophers, begot their contempt in return; so that, at length, that fell out between the defenders and the enemies of Christianity, which had been seen to fall out among all other communications; there has been a great deal written with too much passion on both sides, and invectives have been mixed with arguments.

H

ON BARBEYRAC.

BARBEYRAC is the only commentator of whom there is more account made than of his Author. He translated and commented the farrago of Puffendorf, but he enriched it with a preface, which alone procured a sale for the book. He remounts, in this preface, to the sources of morality, and has the spirited candor to make it appear, that the Fathers of the Church did not always know this pure morality; and that they disfigured it by strange allegories; as when they say that the rag of red cloth exposed at the window by the woman tavern-keeper Rahab, is visibly the blood of Jesus Christ; that Moses expanding his arms during the battle against the Amalechites, represents the cross on which Jesus Christ expired; that the kisses of the Shunamite are the marriage of Jesus Christ with his Church; that the great gate of the Ark of Noah is a type of the human body, and the wicket of the fundament.



Barbeyrac could not, in point of morality, endure, that Augustine should become a persecutor, after having preached Toleration. He highly condemns the gross invectives that Jerom brings off his stomach against his adversaries, and especially against Rufinus, and against Vigilantius. He animadverts on the contradictions in the morality of the Fathers; while it provokes his indignation, that they had some times inspired a hatred of their country, as where Tertullian positively prohibits Christians to carry arms for the defence of the empire.

Barbeyrac had violent enemies, who accused him of wanting to destroy the Christian religion, by rendering those ridiculous, who had maintained it with their indefatigable labors. He defended himself; but in his defence he let appear so profound a contempt for the Fathers of the Church; he testifies so much disdain for their false eloquence, and for their dialectic; he so highly prefers to them Confucius, Socrates, Zaleucus, Cicero, the Emperor Antoninus, Epictetus, that it is easy to see that

Barbeyrac is rather the zealous partisan of the eternal Justice, and of the law of Nature given by God to man, than the worshipper of the holy mysteries of Christianity. If he has deceived himself in taking God to be the father of all mankind; if he has been so unhappy as not to see that God cannot love any but Christians, under a submission to him of heart, and of understanding, his error is at least that of a virtuous soul, and since he loved mankind, it is not for mankind to insult him; it is for God to judge him.

*On Mademoiselle* HUBERT.

MADemoiselle HUBERT was a woman of a great deal of wit, and sister to the Abbot Hubert, well known to the prince your father. She wrote, about the year 1740, jointly with a great Metaphysician, a book entitled, *La Religion essentielle a l'Homme*.

It must be confessed that, unhappily, this essential religion is pure Theism, such as the Noachites practised it, before that God

had deigned to constitute to himself a beloved people in the desarts of Sinai and Oreb, and to give them particular laws. According to Mademoiselle Hubert, and to her friend, the religion essential to man ought to be of all times, of all places, and for all understandings. Every thing that is mystery is above man, and was never made for him: the practice of the virtues can have no relation with the tenets of religious doctrine. The essential religion consists in what a man ought to do, not in what he cannot conceive. Intolerancy is to the essential religion, what barbarism is to humanity, cruelty to mildness. This is precisely the summary of the book. The author is very abstracted: it is a succession of lemmas and theorems which diffuse sometimes more obscurity than light. It is not easy for a reader to keep up the chain of ideas. It is really astonishing that a woman should write like a geometrician, on so interesting a matter; perhaps she had a mind to disgust her readers, who would have persecuted her, if they had understood her,



or had received any pleasure in reading her. As she was a protestant, she has hardly been read by any but Protestants. A Preacher, by name Desroches, undertook to refute her, and that politely enough for a Preacher. The Protestants Ministers ought, one should think, to be more moderate with the Theists, than with the catholic Bishops and Cardinals: For let us suppose, for an instant, what God forbid should happen, that Theism should prevail, that there should be but one plain simple worship, under the authority of the laws and the magistrates, that every thing was reduced to the adoration of a Supreme Being, the avenger of evil, the rewarder of good; the Protestant Preachers would lose nothing by it; they would remain in the official charge of presiding over the prayers addressed to that supreme Being; they would still be masters of morality; their pensions would be preserved to them; or, if they were to lose them, the loss would be comparatively very small. On the contrary, their antagonists have rich prelacies; they are counts, dukes, Princes: they have sovereignties, and tho'

all this worldly grandeur and these riches do not perhaps extremely become the successors of the Apostles, they will never suffer themselves to be stripped of them: Nay, even the temporal rights which they have acquired, are, at present, so connected with the constitution of the Roman Catholic states, that they could not be deprived of them, without violent convulsions.

Now Theism, being a religion clear of enthusiasm, will never, of itself, cause any revolution: It is erroneous, but pacific. All that could be feared is, that if Theism was to be so universally diffused, it might insensibly dispose all people to despise the yoke of the priests; and that, on the first occasion, the magistracy would reduce them to the sole function of praying to God for the people; but so long as they would be moderate they would be respected: there is nothing but the misuse of power that can enervate power. And, in fact, let us, my Prince, remark, that two or three hundred volumes of Theism have not diminished of a shilling the revenue of the Roman Catholic Priests, and that two or three books of

Luther and Calvin have deprived them of about fifty millions a year. Two hundred years ago a quarrel of theology was enough to overturn the system of Europe: Theism could never collect together four people in arms. It may be even said, that this religion, while it deceives the mind, softens it, and is qualified to appease such quarrels as are produced by a misunderstanding of truth. However that may be, I confine myself to the giving a faithful account of things to your Highness: It is yours to judge.

On FRERET.

THE illustrious and profound Freret was perpetual Secretary to the Academy of Belles Lettres at Paris. He had made as great a progress as, humanly speaking, can well be made in the oriental languages, and in the obscure depths of antiquity. In doing, however, justice to his immense erudition, and to his probity, I am far from excusing his heterodoxy. He was, like St. Irenæus, not only persuaded that Jesus Christ was above fifty years of age when



he suffered, but he agreed in opinion with the Targum, that he was not born in the time of Herod, and that his birth must be referred to the time of the little King Janæus, the son of Hircan. The Jews are the only people who hold this singular opinion: M. Freret tried to support it, by pretending that our Gospels were not written till more than forty years after the year in which we place the death of Jesus; that they were not composed but in foreign languages, and in towns very distant from Jerusalem, as Alexandria, Corinth, Ephesus, Antiochia, Ancyra, Thessalonica, all places of great trade, full of Therapeutæ, the disciples of John, of Judæites, of Galileans divided into several sects; thence, says he, the cause of there having been a great number of gospels different from each other: each particular and secret society insisting to have theirs. Freret pretends that the four, which are remained canonical, were the last written. He believes that he produces incontestable proof of it, in his allegation that the first Fathers of the Church quote very often pas-

sages which are only to be found in the gospel of the Egyptians, or in that of St. James, and that Justin is the first who expressly quoted the received gospels.

If this dangerous system was to gain credit, it would evidently follow, that the books bearing the title of Matthew, of John, of Mark, and of Luke, were not written but towards the time of the infancy of Justin, about a hundred years after our vulgar æra. This alone would overturn our religion from its very foundations. The Mahomerants, who saw their false Prophet himself give out the leaves of his Koran, who saw them after his death solemnly reduced into order by the Calif Abubeker, would triumph over us; they would say,

*' We have but one Alcoran, and you have  
' had fifty Gospels; we have pretiously pre-  
' served the original, and you have, at the end  
' of some ages, picked out four Gospels, of  
' which you never knew the dates. You have  
' made your religion piece-meal, ours was  
' made at one stroke, like the creation. You*

*' have varied a hundred times, we have never changed.'*

Thank Heavens! we are not come to that wretched pass. What would become of us if what Freret advances was true! We have sufficient proofs of the antiquity of the four Gospels. Besides, St. Irenæus expressly says there ought to be but four.

I own that Freret cuts to pieces the pitiful argument of Abadie. This Abadie pretends, that the first Christians died for the Gospels, and that it is only for the truth that people will die. But this Abadie acknowledges that the first Christians had forged false Gospels; so that even, according to Abadie himself, the first Christians died for falsities. Abadie ought to have considered two essential points; first, that it is nowhere written that the primitive Christians were examined by the Magistrates touching the Gospels; secondly, that there are Martyrs in all Communions. But if Freret gets the better of Abadie, he is himself overpowered by the miracles which our holy Gospels have operated. He denies the mi-



racles; but there are opposed to him a cloud of witnesses. He denies the witnesses; oh then, there is nothing left for it but to pity him!

I agree with him, that there has been too frequent an use made of pious frauds; I agree with him that, in the Appendix of the first Council of Nice, it is said, that in order to distinguish all the canonical books from the false, they were placed confusedly one with another, upon a great table, and that a prayer was addressed to the Holy Ghost, that he would make all the apocryphal ones fall to the ground: and they immediately fell, and only the genuine ones remained. I confess, in short, that the church has been over-run with false legends: but from there having been falsities and deceit in it, does it follow that it has had no truth, no candor? Certainly Freret goes too far; he demolishes the whole edifice, instead of repairing it: he does as so many others have done, he leads to the adoration of one only God, without the meditation of Christ. But, at least, his book breathes a mo-

deration which might make one almost pardon his errors; he preaches nothing but indulgence and toleration: he does not cruelly abuse the Christians, like Lord Bolingbroke; he does not laugh at them, like the Curate Rabelais, and the Curate Swift. He is a Philosopher the more dangerous for his being very learned, very consequential, and very modest. It is to be hoped that there may be found men of learning, who will refute him better than has been done hitherto.

His most terrible argument is, that if God had deigned to make himself a man and a Jew, and to die in Palestine, by an infamous punishment, to expiate the crimes of mankind, and to banish sin from the earth, there ought to have been no longer any sin or crime on the face of it: whereas, says he, the Christians have been more abominable monsters than all the sectaries of the other religions put together. He brings, for an evident proof of this, the massacres, the wheels, the gibbets, and the burnings at a stake, in the Cevennes, and near a hun-

## EMINENT WRITERS. 99

dred thousand human creatures that perished under our eyes, in that province; the massacres in the valleys of Piemont; the massacres of the Valteline, in the time of Charles Borromeo; the massacres of the Anabaptists massacred and massacrers; the massacres of the Lutherans and Papists, from the Rhine to the extremities of the North; the massacres in Ireland, England, and Scotland, in the time of Charles I. who was himself massacred; the massacres ordered by Mary, and by her father Henry VIII; the massacres on St. Bartholomew's, in France, and forty years more of other massacres between Francis II. and the entry of Henry IV. into Paris; the massacres by the Inquisition; massacres, perhaps, yet more execrable, as being judicially committed; in short, the massacre of twelve millions of the inhabitants of the new world, executed crucifix in hand; and this without reckoning all the massacres precedently committed in the name of Jesus Christ, without reckoning above twenty schisms, and twenty wars of Popes against Popes, and Bishops



against Bishops; without reckoning the poisons, the assassinations, the rapines of the Popes, John XI, John XII, John XVIII, John XXII, of a Gregory VIII, of a Boniface VIII, of an Alexander VI, and of so many other Popes who exceeded in wickedness a Nero or a Caligula. In short, he observes that this horrid and almost uninterrupted chain of religious wars, for fourteen centuries, never subsisted but among Christians, and that no people but themselves ever spilt a drop of human blood for theological arguments. We are obliged to grant to Freret, that all this is true; but in making the enumeration of the crimes which have come to light, he forgets the virtues that have been kept concealed; he forgets especially that those diabolical horrors, of which he has made so prodigious a display, are an abuse of the Christian religion, and not the spirit of it. If Jesus Christ has not destroyed sin on earth, what does that prove? At the most, it can only be inferred, that, as the Jansenists say, Jesus Christ did not die for all, but for many, *pro vobis et*

*multis* : but without presuming to comprehend these high mysteries, let us, my Prince, rest contented with adoring them.

On BOULANGER.

THE *Christianisme Devoile*, or *Christianity Unveiled*, of Boulanger, is not written with that method, and depth of erudition and criticism, which characterise the learned Freret. Boulanger is a bold Philosopher, who remounts to the sources without deigning to sound the streams. He is at once afflicted and intrepid. The horrors with which so many Christian churches, from the very first of their existence, have stained themselves; the cowardly barbarity of the Magistrates, who could sacrifice to the Priests so many worthy subjects; the Princes, who, to please them, have become infamous persecutors; so much nonsense in the ecclesiastical quarrels, so many abominations in the course of those quarrels, the people murdered or ruined, the thrones of so many Priests composed of the spoils, and

cemented with the blood of men; those horrid wars of religion with which Christianity alone has over-run the face of the earth; this enormous chaos of absurdities and of crimes, moves so powerfully the imagination of Boulanger, that, in some places of his book, he goes near to doubt the Divine Providence itself. Fatal error! which, however, the fires of the Inquisition, and our religious wars, might perhaps almost excuse, if it could be excusable. But no pretext can justify Atheism. Should all the Christians have cut one another's throats, should they have devoured the entrails of their brothers murdered for arguments, should there remain no more than one single Christian on the face of the earth, let him but look at the Sun, and it is impossible that he should not acknowledge and adore an Eternal Being: He might, in his affliction, say, my forefathers and my brethren have been monsters, but God is God.



On MONTESQUIEU.

OF all the Philosophers, Montesquieu was the most moderate, and carried the smoothest edge. In his *Persian Letters* he was only pleasant, but in his *Spirit of Laws* he is neat and profound. This work, in short, full of excellent things, and of faults, seems founded on the Law of Nature, and on an indifference for all religions; this it is especially that made him so many enemies, and so many partisans. But the enemies were, for this once, vanquished by the Philosophers. A cry, long kept in, broke forth on all sides; and there began to be discovered the progress of Theism, which had been, for a long while, striking profound roots. The Sorbonne had a good mind to censure the *Spirit of Laws*: but they felt that the public would censure them, and therefore kept silence. There were only a few miserable obscure scribblers, such as an Abbot Guyon, and a Jesuit, who abused the President Montesquieu, and became but the

obscurer for the attempt, notwithstanding the celebrity of the man they were attacking. They would have done more service to religion, if they would have combated with the arms of fair reason; but they were bad advocates in a good cause.

On DE LA METRIE.

THENCEFORWARD there came on a flood of writings against Christianity. La Metrie, a Physician, and the best of the Commentators on Boerhaave, quitted, as he himself said, the physic of the body for the physic of the soul. But his *Homme-Machine*, (Man a Machine,) gave the Theologers room to see, that he administered nothing but poison. He was Reader to the King of Prussia, and Member of his Academy at Berlin. That Monarch, satisfied with his morals and services, never deigned to inquire whether or not La Metrie held erroneous opinions on Theology: he considered in him only the natural Philosopher, and the Academician; in which qualities it was that La Metrie had the honour of that Hero-philosopher's

deigning to compose his funeral elogium. This elogum was read at the Academy by a Secretary of the Cabinet. A King, governed by a Jesuit, might have proscribed La Metrie and his memory; a King, who was governed only by his reason, abstracted the Philosopher from the Infidel, and, leaving to God the care of punishing his impiety, protected and praised his merit.

*On the Curate MESLIER DE TREPIGUI.*

THE Curate Meslier was one of the most singular phenomenons that had yet been seen among all the meteors of evil portent to the Christian religion. He was Curate of the village de Trepigui, in Champagne, near Rocroi, and did also duty at a little village annexed to it, called Butt. His father was a weaver in serge, of the village of Mazerni, dependent on the dutchy of Rhetel. This man, of manners irreproachable, and assiduous at all his duties, gave every year to the poor of his parish all that remained to him of his revenue. He died in 1733, aged fifty-five years. It caused



great surprize the finding, at his dwelling, three large manuscripts, of three hundred and sixty-six sheets each, all three of his own hand-writing, and signed by him, intituled, *My Testament*. He had wrote on a piece of brown paper, in which was wrapped one of the three copies directed to two parishioners, these remarkable words :

‘ I have seen and been convinced of the  
‘ errors, and abuses, the follies, the wicked-  
‘ nefs of mankind. I hate and detest them ;  
‘ I durst not say so much during my life,  
‘ but I will at least say it at my death ; and  
‘ it is for the divulgation of this, that I  
‘ write this present memorial, that it may  
‘ serve as a testimony to all who shall see  
‘ or read it, if they please.’

The substance of this work is a natural and unpolished refutation, without exception, of all the tenets of our doctrine. The stile is very forbidding, and such as might be expected from the Curate of a country village. Towards the composition of this strange writing against the Bible, and against the Church, he had no help but the Bible

itself, and some of the Fathers. Of the three copies, there was one kept by the Grand Vicar of Rheims; another was sent to Chauvelin, Lord Keeper of the Seals; the third remained in the register-office of the place. The Count de Caylus had, for some time, in his hands, one of these three copies, and soon after there were above a hundred in Paris, which were sold for ten Louis-dores-a-piece. Several of the curious in literature still preserve this sad and dangerous monument. A priest who, dying, accuses himself of having professed and taught the Christian religion, made a stronger impression on the minds of many, than the thoughts of Paschal.

Such, methinks, would have done better to reflect on the unaccountable turn of this moody Priest, who aimed at delivering his parishioners from the yoke of a religion which he had himself, for twenty years, preached to them. Why address this Testament to clowns, who could not read? Or, if they could read, why deprive them of a salutary yoke, a necessary fear, which is the

only thing to prevent secret crimes? The belief of rewards and punishments after death, is a curb of which the people stand in need. Religion, well purified, would be the first and best bond of society.

But this Curate wanted to annihilate all religion, even that of Nature. If his book had been well written, the profession, with which the author was dignified, might have had too great an influence on his readers. There have been several little abridgements made of it, of which some have been printed: they are happily cleared of the poison of atheism.

It is yet more surprizing, that a Curate, in the neighbourhood of Paris, durst, even during his life-time, write against that religion which his office was to teach. He was, by the government, sent, without any noise or stir, into exile. The manuscript of his production is extremely rare.

Long before that time, the Bishop of Mans, Lavardin, had, at his death, given a not less singular example; he did not, it is true, leave a testament against the religion



which had procured to him a bishopric, but he declared that he detested it; he refused the Sacraments of the Church, and swore that he had never consecrated the bread and wine, at his saying mass, nor had any intention of baptising children, or of conferring holy orders, at the time of his administering baptism to Christians, and of ordaining Deacons and Priests. This Bishop took a wicked pleasure in the thought of perplexing those who had received at his hands the Sacraments of the Church. He died laughing at the scruples they would have, and enjoyed their disquiet. It was decided that no one should be re-baptised, or re-ordained. Some scrupulous Priests, however, got themselves ordained a second time. The Bishop Lavardin did not, at least, leave behind him any monument against the Christian religion: he was a voluptuary that laughed at every thing; whereas the Curate Mellier was of a gloomy character, and an enthusiast; of a rigid virtue, it is true, but only the more dangerous for that virtue.

L E T T E R   V I I I

*On the* E N C Y C L O P E D I A.

*May it please your Highness,*

**Y**OU ask me some particulars of the Encyclopedia; I obey your orders. This immense project was conceived by Messieurs Diderot and D'Alembert, two Philosophers, who do honor to France. One of them has been distinguished by marks of generosity from the empress of Russia; the other by the refusal of a splendid fortune offered him by that Empress, but which that very philosophy of his would not permit him to accept. The Chevalier Jaucourt, of a family on which he himself reflects a lustre, both by his vast store of knowlege, and by his virtues, joined with these two men of literature, and signalised himself by an indefatigable labor.

## EMINENT WRITERS. 111

They were assisted by the Count of Heronville, Lieutenant-General to the King of France, profoundly versed in all the arts which are included in, or have affinity to, your great art of war; they had also the aid of the Count of Tressan, another Lieutenant-General, whose various merits are universally acknowledged; and of Monsieur de St. Lambert, who, making better verses than Chapelle, has withal not gone the less deep into whatever relates to arms. There are other General Officers who have furnished excellent memorials on Tactics.

This Dictionary was also enriched, by able Engineers, with every thing concerning the attack and defence of places. Presidents and Councillors of Parliament have furnished several articles on the Civil Law. In short, there is no science, no art, no profession of which the greatest masters have not emulously contributed to make this Dictionary a valuable work. It is on earth the first, and perhaps the last example of such a considerable number of men of sci-



perior worth, eagerly concurring, without interest, without any private view, not even that of reputation, (for some have concealed themselves) to form that immortal deposit of the treasures of human knowledge and understanding.

This work was under the auspices, and under the eyes of the Count D'Argenson, a Minister of State, capable of understanding it, and worthy of protecting it. The porch of this prodigious edifice is a preliminary discourse, composed by Monsieur D'Alembert. I dare aver, that this discourse, which received the applause of all Europe, appeared superior to the method of Descartes, and equal to the best of the illustrious Chancellor Bacon's writings on this subject. If in the body of the Dictionary itself there are some frivolous articles, and others that favor more of the declaimer than of the Philosopher; this fault is abundantly repaired by the prodigious quantity of profound and useful articles. The Editors could not well refuse certain young adventurers, who had

## EMINENT WRITERS. 113

a mind to exhibit, in this collection, their productions in company with the master-pieces of great men. An over-politeness was the cause of great injury to this work; it is the saloon of Apollo, in which indifferent Painters have sometimes mixed their paintings with those of a Vanloo, and a Lemoine. But your Highness will, doubtless, have observed, that this collection is precisely the reverse of other collections; that is to say, that the good is greatly predominant over the bad.

You will easily think that, in such a town as Paris, fuller as it is of men of literature than ever were Athens and Rome, those, who were not admitted into this important undertaking, set themselves against it. The Jesuits began; they had wanted to be employed on the articles of Theology, and had been refused. This was enough for them to accuse the Encyclopedists of irreligion; that was a thing in course. The Jansenists, seeing that their rivals had sounded the alarm, did not remain quiet. They were in some measure engaged to shew

more zeal, than those whom they had so much reproached for their easy morality.

As the Jesuits exclaimed against the impiety of the work, the Jansenists howled at it. There happened to be a Convulsionary, or Convulsionist, one called Abraham Chaumeix, who lodged an accusation in form, intituled, *Prejuges legitimes contre L'Encyclopedie*, or, Just Prejudices against the Encyclopedia, of which the first volume had scarce appeared. It was a strange assemblage this of the word *prejudice*, which properly signifies illusion; and the word *just*, which belongs only to what is reasonable. He carried, however, his most unjust prejudices so far as to say, that if the poison did not appear in the first volume, it would, doubtless, be perceived in the following ones; which was as much as to render the Encyclopedists guilty not of what they had said, but of what they would say.

As witnesses are necessary in a criminal process, he produced St. Augustine and Cicero; and these witnesses were so much the more unexceptionable, for that it could



not be suspected, that Abraham Chaumeix had any the least acquaintance with them. The cries of some, possessed with a spirit of malignancy, joined with those of this senseless wretch, excited a persecution that lasted but too long: yet, what came of it at length? That happened which happened to sound philosophy, to the emetic to the circulation of the blood, to inoculation: all these were for a time proscribed, and have at length triumphed over ignorance, stupidity, and envy; the dictionary of the Encyclopedia, notwithstanding its faults, still subsists, and Abraham Chaumeix is gone to hide his rage at Moscow. It is said, the Empress has compelled him to good manners; if so, it is one of the prodigies of her reign.

## LETTER IX.

*On the Jews.*

**O**F all that have attacked, in their writings, the Christian religion, the Jews are perhaps those who are the most to be dreaded; and if there were not to be opposed to them the miracles of our Lord Jesus Christ, it would be very difficult for a man of no more than a moderate share of learning to make head against them. They look on themselves as the elder-born of the family, who, though they have lost their inheritance, still keep their title. They have employed a profound sagacity in explaining all the prophecies to their own advantage. They pretend that the Law of Moses was given them as an eternal one; that it is impossible that God should have changed, and forsworn himself; that our Saviour himself

has acknowledged it. They object to us, that according to Jesus Christ, not a point, not a tittle of the Law, ought to be transgressed; that Jesus was come to accomplish the Law, not to abolish it; that he observed all the commandments of it; that he was circumcised; that he kept the sabbath, and solemnised all the festivals; that he was born a Jew, lived a Jew, and died a Jew; that he never instituted a new religion; that we have not a single line of his; that it is we ourselves, and not he, that made the Christian religion.

A Christian must not pretend to hazard a dispute with a Jew, unless he understands the Hebrew as perfectly as his own mother tongue, as it is this alone that can qualify him to understand the prophecies, and answer the Rabbins. Thus does Joseph Scaliger express himself in his *Excerpta*. 'The Jews are subtile reasoners: How miserably has Justin written against Tryphon, and Tertullian yet worse! He that would refute the Jews, must know Judaism to the bottom. What a shame it is! that



• Christians should write against Christi-  
 • ans, and not dare to write against the  
 • Jews!

The Toldos Jeschut is the most antient Jewish writing that has been transmitted to us against our religion. It is a life of Jesus Christ, quite contrary to our holy Gospels; for the author makes no mention of them; and probably he would have tried to refute them, if he had known any thing of them. He makes Jesus the adulterous son of Mirish, or Mariah, and of a soldier called Joseph Pander, or Panther. He relates, that he and Judas wanted each to make himself head of a sect; that both seemed to operate prodigies in virtue of the name of Jehovah, which they had learnt to pronounce as it ought to be, for it to have its efficacy in conjurations. It is a heap of Rabbinical reveries, much beneath the thousand and one nights. Origen refuted him, and he was the only one that could do it; for he was almost the only one of the Fathers who understood the Hebrew language.

The Jewish Theologers scarce wrote

## EMINENT WRITERS. 119

any thing more tolerable than the Toldos Jeschut, till the eleventh century: then it was, that being more enlightened by the Arabs, who were become the only learned nation, they put more judgment into their works: Those of the Rabbin Aben Ezra were much esteemed: He was, among the Jews, the founder of reason, as much as reason can be admitted into disputes of this kind. Spinoza has made great use of his writings.

Long after Aben Ezra came Maimonides, in the thirteenth century, who had yet a greater reputation. Since that time, to the sixteenth century, the Jews had intelligible books, and consequently the more dangerous; they printed some of them towards the end of the fifteenth century. The number of their manuscripts was considerable. The Christian Theologers, being afraid of their power of seduction, obtained, that all the Jewish books, on which hands could be laid, should be burnt; but they could neither discover all the books, nor convert a single man of them to their religion. There have,

it is true, been seen, some Jews to feign an abjuration, sometimes through fear, but not one of them ever sincerely embraced Christianity. A Carthaginian would sooner have taken the part of Rome, than a Jew have turned Christian. Orobio speaks of some Spanish and Arab Rabbins, who abjured, and became Bishops in Spain; but he takes special care to avoid saying that they had, from their hearts, renounced their religion.

The Jews have not written against Mahometanism; which they are far from holding in such horror as they do our doctrine: The reason of which is evident, the Mahometans do not make a God of Jesus Christ.

By a fatality never enough to be deplored, many learned Christians have quitted their religion for Judaism. Rittangel, Professor of the Oriental Languages at Kœnigsberg, in the seventeenth century, embraced the Mosaic Law. Antony, Minister at Geneva, was, in 1632, burnt for having abjured Christianity in favor of Judaism. The Jews reckon him among the Martyrs who do them the most honor. His disastrous per-



sion must have been very strong, since he preferred to retractation the suffering so cruel a death.

In *Nissachon Vetus*, that is to say, the book of the *Antient Victory*, may be seen a stroke concerning the superiority of the Mosaic Law over the Christian and the Persian, which is in the true Oriental taste. A King commands a Jew, a Galilean, and a Mahometan, each to quit his own religion, and to embrace whichsoever he pleases of the two others; and if they do not change, the Executioner is there to strike off their heads. The Christian says, since there is a necessity of dying or changing, I had rather be of the religion of Moses than of that of Mahomet; for the Christians are more antient than the Mahometans, and the Jews more antient than Jesus; I will then turn Jew. The Mahometan said, I cannot bear the thoughts of being a dog of a Christian, I had rather be a dog of a Jew, since the Jews have the right of priority. May it please your Majesty, says the Jew, you see I can neither embrace the law of the

Christian, nor that of the Mahometan, since both of them have given the preference to mine. The King, moved at this reason, sent away the Executioner, and turned Jew. All that can be inferred from this little story, is, that Princes ought not to employ executioners for Apostles.

However, the Jews have had rigid and scrupulous Doctors, who have been afraid that their countrymen should suffer themselves to be overcome by the Christians. There was, especially, a Rabbin among them, who thus expresses himself: ‘ *The wise forbid the lending money to a Christian, lest the creditor should be perverted by the debtor. But a Jew may borrow money of a Christian, without the fear of being seduced by him; for a debtor always avoids his creditors.*’

Notwithstanding this curious advice, the Jews have always lent their money, at an exorbitant interest, to Christians, and have not been the more converted by them.

After the famous *Nassachon Vetus*, we have a relation of the dispute between the Rabbin Zechiel, and the Dominican Fryar

Paul, called Cyriac. This is a conference held in the year 1263, between those two learned men in the presence of Don Jaquez, King of Arragon, and of the Queen his wife. This conference is very memorable. The two champions were well versed in Hebrew and in antiquity. The Talmud, the Targum, the archives of the Sanhedrim, were on the table. The contested passages were explained into Spanish. Zechiel maintained, that Jesus had been condemned under the King Alexander Janæus, (and not under Herod the Tetrarch) agreeably to what is related in the Toldos Jeschut, and in the Talmud: ‘ Your Gospels (said he) were not written till towards the beginning of your second century, and are not authentic like our Talmud. We could not crucify him you speak of, in the time of Herod the Tetrarch, since we had not the power of life and death in our hands; we could not have crucified him, because that manner of punishment was not in use among us. Our Talmud has it, that he who perish-



‘ ed in the time of Jannæus was condemn-  
‘ ed to be stoned to death. We can no more  
‘ believe your Gospels than those pretended  
‘ Letters of Pilate which you have forged.’  
—It was, no doubt, easy to confound this  
vain Rabbinical erudition. The Queen put  
an end to the conference, by asking of the  
Jews why they stunk?

This same Zechiel had also several other  
conferences, of which one of his disciples  
gives us an account. Each party attributed  
to itself the victory, though it can never be  
but on the side of truth.

*The Rampart of Faith*, written by a Jew,  
called Isaac, and found in Africa, is far su-  
perior to the relation of Zechiel, which is very  
confused and full of puerilities. Isaac is  
methodical, and a good Dialectician; never  
perhaps had error a greater support. He  
has collected, under the heads of a hundred  
propositions, all the difficulties of which the  
unbelievers have been since so free.

There it is you may see the objections a-  
gainst the two genealogies of Jesus-Christ,  
so different from each other.

## EMINENT WRITERS. 125

Against the quotations of the passages of the Prophets, which are not to be found in the Jewish books.

Against the divinity of Jesus-Christ, which is not expressly announced in the Gospels, but which is not the less proved in the holy Councils.

Against the opinion that Jesus-Christ had no brothers nor sisters.

Against the different narratives of the Gospels, which have however been reconciled or harmonized.

Against the history of Lazarus.

Against the pretended falsifications of the antient Canonical writings.

In short, the most determined infidels have hardly advanced any thing that is not in this Rabbin Isaac's *Rampart of the Faith*. There is, however, no making a crime of it to the Jews, their having endeavoured to justify their antient religion at the expence of ours. They are only to be pitied. But what reproaches ought not to be made to those who have availed themselves of the disputes of the Christians and Jews to com-

bat both religions? Let us pity those who, frightened at the contradictions of seventeen centuries, and tired with so much disputing, have thrown themselves into Theism, and will admit only one God, with a pure morality. If they have preserved Charity, they have renounced Faith: they have believed themselves to be men, instead of being Christians. They ought to be submissive, and they have aspired to be wise. But how much is the folly of the cross superior to such wisdom! says the Apostle Paul.

*Of OROBIO.*

OROBIO was so learned a Rabbin, that he gave into none of those reveries which have been reproached to the other Rabbins. Profound, without being obscure, possessed of polite literature, a man of an agreeable turn of wit, and extremely well-bred. Philip Limborch, of the Arminian party in Amsterdam, made an acquaintance with him towards the year 1685. They had long disputes together, but without any acrimo-



ny, and like two friends that seek to enlighten each other. Conversations rarely clear up the subject-matters of them: It is not easy to follow constantly the same object, and not to run out of the course: One question begets another. In a quarter of an hour, one is surprised to find one's self got insensibly off the first ground. They agreed then on putting into writing the objections and answers, which afterwards both of them printed in 1687. It is, perhaps, the first dispute between two Theologers, in which there are no reciprocal invectives: On the contrary, the two adversaries treat one another with respect.

Limborch refutes the opinions of 'the most learned and the most illustrious Jew;' who, with the same formularies of compliment, refutes the most learned and the most 'illustrious Christian.' Orobio even never speaks of Jesus Christ but with the greatest circumspection. This is the summary of the dispute.

Orobio sets out with maintaining, that it

was never ordained to the Jews by their Law, to believe in a Messiah.

That it is no where to be found, that Israel was threatened to be no longer the chosen people, if it did not believe in the future Messiah.

That in no place is it said that the Judicial law is the adumbration or figure of another law; that, on the contrary, it is every where said, that the Law of Moses is to be eternal.

That every Prophet even who should work miracles, in order to change any thing in the Law of Moses, ought to be punished with death.

That, true it was, that some Prophets had foretold to the Jews, in their calamities, that they should have one day a deliverer; but that this deliverer would be the support of the Mosaic Law, instead of being its destroyer.

That the Jews are in constant expectation of a Messiah, who is to be a powerful, and just King.

That one proof of the eternal immutabi-

lity of the Mosaic religion, is, that the Jews, dispersed all over the earth, have for all that never changed a single tittle in their law, and that the Israelites of Rome, of England, of Holland, of Germany, of Poland, of Turkey, of Persia, &c. have constantly held the same doctrine since the taking of Jerusalem by Titus, without there having risen up among them any the least sect, that has deviated from one single observance, or from one single opinion of the Israelite nation.

That, on the contrary, the Christians have been divided among themselves from the very first of their religion's coming into existence.

That they are, at this moment, split into more sects, than there are Christian states, and that they have persecuted each other with fire and sword for above twelve centuries; that if the Apostle Paul allowed it to be right that the Jews should continue to observe the precepts of their law, the Christians of these days ought not to re-



proach them for doing but what the Apostle Paul had permitted them.

That it is not out of hatred and malice that Israel had not acknowledged Jesus; neither is it out of base or carnal views that the Jews adhere to their antient law; that, on the contrary, it is only in the hope of the blessings of Heaven that they remained faithful to it, notwithstanding the persecutions by the Babylonians, the Syrians, the Romans, notwithstanding their dispersion and disgrace, notwithstanding the hatred of so many nations; and that a whole people ought not to be called carnal, who, for near forty centuries, have been the Martyrs of God.

That it is the Christians who have had carnal advantages in view; witness almost all the first Fathers of the Church, who hoped to live a thousand years in a New Jerusalem, amidst abundance, and amidst all bodily delights.

That it is impossible that the Jews should have crucified the true Messiah, since the Prophets expressly say, that the Messiah

shall come to cleanse Israel of all sin; that he will not leave a single stain in Israel; that it would be the most horrible sin, the most abominable pollution, as well as the most palpable contradiction, that God should send his Messiah to be crucified.

That the precepts of the Ten Commandments being perfect, any new mission was entirely useless.

That the Mosaic Law never had any mystical sense.

That it would be deceiving mankind, to tell them things which were to be understood in a sense different from that in which they were expressed.

That the Christian Apostles never equalled the miracles of Moses. That the Evangelists and Apostles were not all simple people; since Luke was a Physician, and Paul had studied under Gamaliel, of whom the Jews have preserved the writings.

That there is not the shadow of simplicity or idiotism in the requiring of the new converts to bring all their money in to them: that Paul was so far from being a plair

dealer, that he emplyed the greatest artifice on his coming to sacrifice at the temple, and in swearing before Festus and Agrippa that he had done nothing against Circumcision, and against the Law of Judaism.

That, in short, the contradictions which are to be found in the Gospels, prove that those books could not be inspired by God.

Limborch answers all these assertions with all the strongest arguments that it is possible to employ; and had so great a confidence in the goodness of his cause, that he did not balance to have this celebrated dispute committed to the Press; but as he was of the Arminian party, that of the Gomarists persecuted him: they reproached him with having exposed the truths of the Christian religion to a combat in which its enemies might triumph. Orobio was not persecuted in the Synagogue.



On URIEL D'ACOSTA,

THERE happened to Uriel d'Acosta much the same thing as to Spinoza; he renounced, at Amsterdam, Judaism, to attach himself to Philosophy. A Spaniard and an Englishman having applied to him for counsel, about their inclination to turn Jews, he dissuaded them from this design, and talked to them against the religion of the Hebrews. He was condemned to receive, at the pillar, forty stripes save one, and afterwards to prostrate himself on the threshold of the door of the synagogue; so that all the congregation trampled on him as they came out.

He had this adventure printed in a small book still extant: there it is, he professes himself to be nor Jew, nor Christian, nor Mahometan, but the adorer of one only God. This small book is intitled, *An Example of human Life*. The same Limborch refuted Uriel d'Acosta as he had done Q. robio; and the Magistracy of Amsterdam

did not in the least interfere in these quarrels.

## LETTER X.

## ON SPINOSA.

*May it please your Highness,*

**I**T appears to me, that as false a judgment has been formed of Spinoza's character as of his writings. Here is what has been said of him in two historical dictionaries.

• Spinoza had so great a desire of immortalising himself, that he would have gladly sacrificed to that glory his present life, should he have been sure of being torn to pieces by an enraged populace. The absurdities of Spinosism have been perfectly refuted by John Bredenbourg, a citizen of Rotterdam.

So many words, so many falsties. Spinoza was precisely the contrary of the picture here drawn of him. It is right to detest his atheism, but wrong to be-lye his character. Never was there a man, in every sense, more averse from vain glory. This must be owned. Do not let us, while we condemn, calumniate him. The Minister Colerus, who long occupied the very room in which Spinoza died, agrees with all his contemporaries, in owning that Spinoza constantly lived in a profound retreat, seeking to secrete himself from the world, an enemy to all superfluity, modest in his conversation, careless of his dress, working with his own hands, never putting his name to his works: All this is not in the character of a man ambitious of reputation.

As to Bredenbourg, so far from refuting him perfectly well, I dare believe that he confuted him perfectly ill. I have read his work, and leave the judgment of it to whoever shall, like me, have the patience to read it. Bredenbourg was so far from clear-



ly confounding Spinoza, that he himself, frightened at the weakness of his own argument, became forcedly and against his will, the disciple of him whom he had attacked : A great example this of the weakness and inconstancy of the human understanding.

The life of Spinoza is written circumstantially enough, and too well known for any repetition of it here being necessary. Your Highness will, however, give me leave to request your joining with me in the making one reflection on the treatment which this Jew, when, as yet young, met with from the Synagogue. Being accused by two young people of his own age, of not believing on Moses; they began, in order to put him in the right way again, by assassinating him with the stab from a knife, as he was coming out of the Play-house; some say, as he was coming out of the Synagogue, which is more likely.

After they had failed of the final dispatch of his body, they were determined not to miss his soul : they proceeded to the great.

er excommunication, or Chammataë. Spino-  
sa pretended, that the Jews had no authori-  
ty to exercise this kind of jurisdiction in  
Amsterdam. The Town-Council referred  
the decision of this affair to the Consistory  
of the Pastors; these concluding that if the  
Synagogue had such a right, the Consistory  
might enjoy it with greater reason, gave it  
in favour of the Synagogue.

Spinoza, then, was proscribed by the Jews,  
with great ceremony: the Singer of Israel  
fulminated the words of execration; the  
horn was sounded, the black tapers were  
melted, drop by drop, into a vessel full of  
blood: Benedict Spinoza was devoted to  
Belzebub, to Satan, to Ashtaroth, and all  
the Synagogue cried, Amen!

It is strange, that such an act of jurisdic-  
tion should have been allowed, an act that  
resembles more the procedure of a meeting  
of Sorcerers, than a just judgment. It is not  
unlikely, that without the stab from a knife,  
and the black tapers quenched in blood,  
Spinoza would never have written against  
Moses and against God. Persecution exas-

perates : It emboldens those who feel they have genius; and will render those irreconcilable whom indulgence would have kept within bounds.

Spinoza renounced Judaism, but without ever embracing Christianity. He did not publish his treatise on superstitious ceremonies, or *Tractatus Theologico-politicus*, till 1670, about eight years after his excommunication. It has been pretended that there were discoverable in this book the seeds of his Atheism : This was pretended for much the same reason of prejudice, that one sees a bad physiognomy in a man who has done a bad action. This book is so far from Atheism, that Jesus Christ is often mentioned in it as one sent by God. This work is very profound, and the best he ever wrote. I doubtless condemn the opinions of it, but I cannot help esteeming its erudition. It is he, I think, who the first remarked, that the Hebrew word *ruhag*, which we translate by *soul*, signified, among the Jews, wind, breath, in its natural sense; and that whatever was eminent



ly great, bore the title of divine: The cedars of God, the winds of God, the melancholy of Saul, was the evil spirit from God, the virtuous were the children of God.

It was he, who the first unfolded that dangerous system of Aben-Ezra, that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses, nor the book of Joshua by Joshua: It is only from after him, that Le Clerc, several Dutch Divines, and the celebrated Newton, have embraced that opinion.

Newton differs in this only from him, that he attributes to Samuel the books of Moses, whereas Spinoza makes Esdras the author of them. You may see all the reasons which Spinoza gives for his system, in his eighth, ninth, and tenth chapters: one may observe great exactness in his chronology, a great knowledge of the history, language, and manners of his antient country, with more of method and of reasoning, than in all the Rabbins put together. It appears to me, that few writers before him, had evidently proved that the Jews acknowledged any Prophets among the Gentiles: In a

word, he made a guilty use of his intellectual lights, but he had very great ones.

You must search out Atheism in the ancient Philosophers, but you see it no where openly, but in the posthumous works of Spinoza. His treatise on Atheism, not being under that title, and being besides written in an obscure Latin, and a very dry stile, the Count de Boulainvilliers has reduced it into French, under the title of Refutation of Atheism: but we have only the poison, Boulainvilliers, it may be supposed, not having had the time to give us the antidote.

There are few who have remarked, that Spinoza, in his deplorable book, is for ever speaking of an infinite and supreme being. He announces a God in the same breath that he is aiming at annihilating the belief of one. The arguments with which Bayle overwhelms him, would appear to me unanswerable, if, in fact, Spinoza had admitted a God: for that God being, according to him, nothing but the immensity of things, such a God being at once matter and thought, it is absurd, as Bayle has

very well proved it, to suppose that God should be at once active and passive, cause and subject, doing the ill and suffering it, loving and hating himself, killing and eating himself: A man of any sense, says Bayle, would prefer cultivating the earth with his teeth and nails, to the cultivating an hypothesis so shocking, and so absurd: For, according to Spinoza, those who would say, ten thousand Germans have killed ten thousand Turks, would express themselves ill and falsely; they should say, God, modified into ten thousand Germans, has killed God modified into ten thousand Turks.

Bayle would be much in the right, if Spinoza had acknowledged a God; but the fact is, that he does not at all acknowledge one, and has only employed that sacred word that he might not too much shock mankind.

Wrapped up in Descartes, he makes a bad use of that equally celebrated and senseless expression of Descartes, '*Give me motion and matter, and I will soon form a world.*'



Full also of the idea so incomprehensible and so repugnant to Natural Philosophy, of the plenum, he imagined to himself that there could exist no more than one substance, one only power that reasons in men, feels and remembers in animals, sparkles in the fire, flows in the waters, blows in the wind, roars in the thunder, vegetates on the earth, and is co-extended every where through space.

According to him, every thing is necessary, every thing is eternal; creation is impossible: No design in the structure of the universe, in the permanence of the species, and in the succession of individuals. The ears are no longer made for hearing, the eyes for seeing, the heart for receiving and propelling the blood; the stomach for digesting, the brain for thinking, the organs of generation for propagating life; and the divine designs are nothing but the effects of a blind necessity.

You have herein a just exposition of Spinoza's system, and withal, you have here the weak sides by which his strong hold is

## EMINENT WRITERS. 143

to be attacked; a strong-hold, (if I do not deceive myself,) on an ignorance of Natural Philosophy, and on a most prodigious mis-  
use of Metaphysics.

It rather appears to me, and indeed it ought to be wished, that there are now-a-days few Atheists. The Author of *La Henriade* has said, '*A Catechiser announces God to Children, Newton demonstrates him to the Wise.*' The more one knows of Nature, the more one must adore God.

Atheism can do no good to morality, and may do much harm. It is almost as dangerous as fanaticism. You are, my Prince, equidistant as from either, and this it is which authorises the liberty I have taken to lay the truth before you, without any disguise. I have answered all your questions from those about that learned buffoon Rabelais, to those concerning that rash metaphysician Spinoza.

I could have added to this list a croud of little books, hardly known to any but to Librarians; but I was afraid that in multiplying the number of the guilty, I should

seem to diminish their guilt. I hope that the little I have said will confirm your Highness in your opinion of our doctrine, and our scriptures, on observing, that they have been only combated by head-strong Stoics, by men of literature, vain of their knowlege, by people of the world, who know nothing but their own weak reason, by men of wit who take jests for arguments, by Theologers, in short, who, instead of walking in the ways of God, have bewildered themselves in their own ways.

Once more, what ought to be a just consolation to a soul so noble as yours, is, that the Theism, which now-a-days destroys so many souls, can never disturb the peace of nations, nor be prejudicial to the sweets of society. Controversy has every where caused human blood to flow, and Theism has stopped the effusion. It is, I confess, but a bad remedy, but it has cured the most cruel wounds. It is excellent for this life, if it is detestable for the other. To be sure it damns a man, but it renders him peaceable.



Your country has formerly been in flames upon matters of argument; Theism restored concord to it. It is clear, that if Poltrot, James Clement, Jaurignè, Balthazor Gerard, John Chatel, Damiens, the Jesuit Malagrida, &c. &c. had been Theists, there would have been fewer Princes assassinated.

God forbid, that I should prefer Theism to the holy religion of a Ravailiac, of a Damiens, of a Malagrida, which they knew so little, and injured so much! I only say that it is more agreeable to live with Theists, than with such as Ravailiac, or Madam Brinvilliers, who went regularly to confession: But if your Highness is not of my opinion, why then—I am in the wrong.

## A SECRET PROJECT,

*Presented to the Ottoman Emperor, MUSTAPHA the III<sup>d</sup>, by ALI BEN ABDALLAH, Bascha of CAIRO. From the Press newly established at CAIRO. Translated from the Turkish Language.*

**S**OVEREIGN LORD OF THE UNIVERSE, ever victorious, beloved by thy faithful subjects, dreaded by the infidel Christians, and revered all over the East, nothing dares stand in opposition to thy supreme power, but the Alcoran, and those who support it with their authority, the Mufti, the Imaums, and the Dervises. Thy power, it is true, thy wisdom maintain thee on the throne, and make thee prosper in the greatest part of thy august designs; but our superstitious religion is, and ever will be an obstacle to the happiness of thy empire.

The Alcoran fills the brave and noble Mahometans with ridiculous and pernicious ideas; it begets in their minds a misground-

ed fear of eternal torments, and of certain monsters, whom the expositors of that book call evil angels. This pretended revelation forbids to those nations, subject to thy empire, the use of wine, and other innocent pleasures of life, and flatters them, to indemnify them for this privation, with the imaginary hope of paradise after their death. Numbers of thy subjects consecrate themselves to the false theology of the Prophet; while, to the prejudice of the public good, they neglect the cultivation of rice, and of silk, and other useful employments. All thy vast Empire passes, in the moschs and in idleness, a whole quarter of the year, which is consumed by the Fridays appointed for divine service, the festivals of Mahomet, of Aboubeckher, of Ali, of Omar, of Abdallah, &c. not to mention the considerable sums which the maintenance of an infinite number of sacred idlers must cost. There is then sacrificed to the precepts of Mahomet, and to the whims of his Priests, the profit which would be produced by the labor of thirty millions of men, for three



months of the year. In short, the happiness and wealth of the Mahometans can never arrive at their height, the treasures of the Empire will be deprived of a fertile spring, the glory of its head will be stopped in its course, so long as the Alcoran shall dare to prescribe laws to the subjects of the first Monarch of the world.

Nothing, sublime Emperor, would be more advantageous, than, if it were possible, to abolish and suppress our religion: but, in short, if circumstances do not admit of destroying this phantom by force of arms, it may at least be indirectly attacked and ruined, little by little. If thou deignest to employ these last means, it is almost indubitable that Superstition shall sink under the efforts of the Conqueror of Georgia. A Jew, poor and ambitious, established the Christian religion; an artful Arabian Merchant founded ours. Why should it be more difficult to a powerful Prince, who possesses the highest degree of wisdom, to overturn a false faith, by sapping, little by little, its foundations? Yes! dread Sovereign, to de-

stroy the religion of Mahomet, that rival of thy authority, that enemy to the happiness of thy states, it will be enough that thy Will shall dictate the decree of it; and that thy sublime penetration shall supplement whatever may be deficient of the following means.

I. Let there be made a collection of the Fables contained in our Alcoran, and in that of the Christians, in order that, by a comparison of the one with the other, it may be seen that our religion is, within a small matter, as ridiculous as that of the Christians.

II. Let there be translated into our language such books as appear in favour of the Religion of Nature, as also the controversies the Jews, the Catholics, the Lutherans, the Calvinists, the Greeks, the Quakers, the Memnonites, and of the other Christian sects among themselves.

III. On the Friday, let it be permitted, during divine service, to keep the shops open, to sell sherbet in the public houses, and gardens.

IV. Let the festivals of the second order, which are already suppressed in Persia, be no longer celebrated in the Ottoman Empire.

V. Let it be permitted, and even recommended to the Priests, to wear, at the times that they do not exercise the functions of their ministry, secular habits, in order thereby to give greater freedom to their conversation, and manner of thinking.

VI. Let there be assigned to the Priests of town and country, instead of a part of their maintenance in ready money, some lands, in order to divert their attention from the care of preserving their authority.

VII. Let whatever is competent to the jurisdiction of civil tribunals, as, for example, the publication and confirmation of marriages, be once for all taken away from the Doctors of the Mahometan Law, and given in charge to the Magistrates appointed by the Emperor.

VIII. That, for the future, in order to stop up one of the principal sources of



## EMINENT WRITERS. 151

superstition, the youth shall be no longer taught in the public schools, by the Interpreters of the Alcoran, but by the Civilians, and Philosophers.

IX. When by these preliminary means the faith of the Mahometans shall have been in some measure staggered, let some persons, considerable for their rank, or for their fortune, be excited, on the part of the Sultan, with assurance of his protection, to separate openly, and all at once, from our religion. In this case, a great number of the inhabitants, both of the Capital and of the Provinces, will follow in crouds, such as shall thus take the lead, and follow them, partly out of conviction, partly out of vanity, or out of interest, or for other motives. Nor needs there any doubt to be made of the rest of the nation not being at length tired, at seeing itself left to keep by themselves the old forms of worship. The history of the Christians is full of the like separations; we see, that not more than two centuries ago, whole States of Europe, under the conduct of their Princes, have, with-

out obstacle, shaken off the yoke of the  
Must of Rome.

Proceeding, in this manner, INVINCIBLE  
MONARCH, then thou shalt execute an en-  
terprise, looked upon as impossible, and  
yet far from difficult, to the power and  
wisdom of MUSTAPHA the III<sup>d</sup>. Thou shalt  
be the author of the ruin of a most pernici-  
ous superstition, which has already lasted  
above these thousand years: all the Maho-  
metans will owe to thee the beginning of  
their happiness, which thenceforward no-  
thing will be able to disturb, and thy name  
shall be the object of admiration to remotest  
posterity.

**THE END.**

